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VIJAYAWADA, THURSDAY, JUNE 30, 2022; PAGES 12 ₹3

KRITI SANON,
PRABHAS TO
SHARE SIZZLING
CHEMISTRY IN
ADIPURUSH!

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IMRAN KHAN EARNED RS 36 MILLION FROM SELLING THREE GIFTED WATCHES

Pakistan's ousted prime minister Imran Khan earned Rs 36 million by illegally selling three watches gifted to him by foreign dignitaries to a local watch dealer, according to a media report on Wednesday. According to the details of an official inquiry shared with Geo News, Khan during his tenure as prime minister earned millions of rupees from these jewel-class watches collectively worth over Rs 154 million. The watches were gifted to him by foreign leaders. The most expensive watch – more than Rs 101 million value – was retained by the then prime minister at 20 per cent of its value after his government amended the Toshakhana rules and settled the gift retention price at 50 per cent of its original value, the report said.

BRITISH-ERA PATNA DM OFFICE BUILDING SHOWN IN 'GANDHI' RAZED

Historic British-era Patna District Magistrate's office building, part of the centuries-old Collectorate campus, which was featured in key scenes in Oscar-winning film 'Gandhi' has been demolished, sending a wave of grief among heritage lovers and Gandhians. Bulldozers gnawed at the elegant two-storey main Patna Collectorate building, situated on the banks of the river Ganga, a couple of days ago, reducing it to a skeletal state. The building was felled as part of the redevelopment project of the Bihar government.

SEBI PENALISES NSE, FORMER CHIEF CHITRA RAMKRISHNA, 16 OTHERS

Sebi has imposed a penalty totalling Rs 44 crore on 18 entities, including National Stock Exchange (NSE), its business development Officer Ravi Varanasi, former MD and CEO Chitra Ramkrishna and her adviser Subramanian Anand along with certain stock brokers in the 'dark fibre' case. Apart from NSE and its former officials, others penalised by Sebi are stock brokers –Way2Wealth Brokers and GKN Securities– Sampark Infotainment and their respective employees. The regulator has imposed a penalty of Rs 7 crore on NSE, Rs 5 crore each on Ramkrishna, Varanasi and Subramanian Anand, who was Group Operating Officer and adviser to then MD Ramkrishna.

IN RAJASTHAN'S PALI, TWO COMMUNITIES SHUN LAVISH WEDDINGS

No DJs, no fireworks and no riding horseback for the groom. These are some of the guidelines that leaders in two communities in Rajasthan's Pali district have issued to make weddings a less expensive affair. And grooms should be clean-shaven—beards don't go with the ceremony—the elders feel. Leaders of both Kumawat and Jat communities have also agreed to put a cap on gifts relatives can give to a couple, which includes jewellery, clothes and cash. The rules discourage customary offering of opium too. The Kumawats, a community of potters, at a meeting of its members from 19 villages on June 16 came up with the rules.

JAGAN-RAGHURAMA RAJU FEUD

All eyes on Modi's Bhimavaram meet

Political enthusiasts are watching whether the YSRCP rebel MP and the Chief Minister will share dais

SNV SUDHIR
■ VIJAYAWADA

All eyes are on the Union government's July 4 programme, followed by a public meeting in Bhimavaram organised to commemorate the 125th birth anniversary of legendary freedom fighter Alluri Seetarama Raju, which would be attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The presence of the Prime Minister is not the only thing that will be keenly watched by the political enthusiasts in the State. They will be watching whether YSRCP rebel MP from Narasapur Kanumuru Raghurama Krishna Raju and Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy will share the dais or not. While the MP has been openly criticising certain policies of the YSRCP government and at loggerheads with the current dispensation, the ruling party has already filed a disqualification petition against Raghurama Krishna Raju

with the Lok Sabha Speaker. There are also multiple cases, including a CID case, pending against him in Andhra Pradesh.

The ongoing slugfest between Raju and his own party leaders has been a point of discussion in the political circles in the State for the last two years.

Raju's latest remark that he wants to see the Chief Minister on the dais and it will be quite interesting has only increased the curiosity levels about the July 4 meeting.

It's all the way a matter of pride and prestige for Raghurama Raju to host the Prime Minister in his constituency and Bhimavaram is the epicentre of wealthy and influential Kshatriyas, the community Raju belongs to, in Andhra Pradesh. As per protocol, both the Chief Minister and the local MP should participate in the official meeting of the Prime Minister.



As per the Chief Minister's travel schedule, he will return from Paris on July 3 and will most likely attend the PM's programme the next day.



Raju has already approached the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) seeking protection during his visit to Bhimavaram on July 4 and also fears arrest by the local police if he visits his constituency.



HC directs CID to prosecute MP Raghu Ramakrishna

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh High Court, on Wednesday, granted permission to the State Crime Investigation Department to prosecute rebel MP Raghu Ramakrishna Raju in various cases other than the sedition case. The High Court dismissed a petition filed by the MP requesting that all the cases filed by

the CID against him be quashed and that directions be given to the CID to stop further action in this regard. The HC ruled that the CID could interrogate Raju under various sections, other than the Section 124 A (Sedition). The CID can question Raju at Dilkusha Guest House in Hyderabad in the presence of his lawyer only from 10 am to 5 pm.

Govt extends free accommodation for staff for two months

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The AP government has withdrawn the decision to cancel free accommodation for employees coming to Amaravathi from Hyderabad, unable to stand the pressures of government employees. Within hours of cancelling the provision, the government extended free accommodation for employees issuing cancellation orders.

K Praveen Kumar, Special Chief Secretary to the Government (GPM & AR), issued the orders earlier on Wednesday. The General Administration Department (GAD) ordered that the flats where the employees were staying be vacated and handed over in good condition by June 30 (Thursday).

The orders worried the employees as they had only one day to vacate the flats. AP Secretariat Employees Association president K Venkatarami Reddy took the issue to the notice of the government and the Special Chief Secretary to Chief Minister, Dr KS Jawahar Reddy. He said that the instruction to vacate the flats by June 30 was severely objectionable as there was only one day, which is insufficient as the employees have to get alternative accommodations.

GST COUNCIL MEET

Buggana seeks exemption for works done to local bodies

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

At the 47th GST council meeting held in Chandigarh on Wednesday, Finance Minister Buggana Rajendranath expressed his concerns over the financial burdens, exemption for the works done to local bodies limited to certain services, Constitution of GST tribunals and cross empowerment of enforcement activities on taxpayers.

He said that for formation of GST tribunals, selection of members and procedure should be studied in detail.

Rajendranath further said that all public services related to government organisation and public authorities should be exempted by including additional services not limiting to four services proposed.



"Taxpayers should not suffer for multiple inspections or investigations by the State and Central authorities at the same time. A mechanism should be derived to conclude all proceedings by one officer of the taxpayers' territorial jurisdiction," said Rajendranath.

12 states demand extension of GST compensation

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

About a dozen states on Wednesday pitched for extending by a few years the compensation paid to states for revenue lost from the implementation of the goods and services tax (GST) regime.

The GST Council, the highest decision-making body of the indirect tax regime, however, did not take any decision at its meeting here. A final decision is likely to be taken in the next GST council meeting in the first week of August, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said while talking to the media after the 47th GST Council meeting here. "As many as 16 states spoke on GST compensation in today's meeting. Of this there were 3-4 states that said that they have to stand on their own and not depend on compensation," Sitharaman said.

Uddhav Thackeray quits as Maha CM

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Stating that he was not interested "in playing the numbers' game," Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Wednesday said he was resigning from his post.

"I am also quitting as member of Legislative Council," Thackeray said in a webcast, while appealing the workers of his party not to take to the streets in protest.

Thackeray's announcement came minutes after the Supreme Court refused to stay Maharashtra Governor's direction to the Shiv Sena-NCP-Congress Maha Vikas Aghadi government to take a floor test in the Assembly on Thursday. He had no regret leaving his post, Thackeray, who was facing a rebellion by majority of Shiv Sena MLAs led by Eknath Shinde, said.

Thackeray, who heads the Shiv Sena, appealed to Sena workers to allow the rebel legislators to return and not take to the streets in protest.

The rebels, earlier in the evening, left Guwahati where



they were camping for over a week, and landed in Goa.

"Let the rebels who grew politically because of Shiv Sena and Balasaheb Thackeray get joy and satisfaction of pulling down his son from the post of chief minister," Uddhav Thackeray said.

"I don't want to get into the numbers' game. It would be shameful for me to see if even one of my own party colleagues stands against me," he said.

He said security has been tightened in Mumbai and Shiv Sainiks have been detained. Congress and NCP did not oppose his deci-

sion to rename Aurangabad as Sambhajinagar in the last cabinet meeting, held in the evening, Thackeray said. He also thanked Congress president Sonia Gandhi and NCP chief Sharad Pawar for their cooperation and support while running the MVA government.

"Congress leader Ashok Chavan told me that if the rebels want, Congress would get out of the government and extend outside support.

Those who were expected to ditch me, stood by me while my own left me," he said.

Referring to the rebels, he said, "What were your problems? Instead of going to Surat and Guwahati, you could have come to me directly and expressed your views." Shiv Sena is a party of common man and has faced several challenges successfully, Uddhav Thackeray said, adding he would rebuild the party.

"I thank Shiv Sainiks for standing by me. Those who grew politically because of Shiv Sena were disgruntled, while those who did not get anything were loyal," he said.

Probe sought into unauthorised withdrawal of funds

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh Government Employees Association (APGEA) has lodged a complaint with the Special Chief Secretary of the Finance Department and the Principal Accountant General, AP, regarding unauthorised withdrawal from the GPF accounts of more than 90,000 employees and sought inquiry into the issue. APGEA president KR Suryanarayana said it was shocking that huge amounts of money ranging from Rs 20,000 to Rs 1,50,000 were debited in March 2022 from the GPF accounts without any authorisation and consent of employees.

The APGEA president said that according to an analysis of the GPF statements, the DA arrears credited to the GPF accounts of employees and teachers in the financial year 2021-2022 were shown as withdrawals and debited to the accounts.



It was shocking that huge amounts of money ranging from Rs 20,000 to Rs 1,50,000 were debited in March 2022 from the GPF accounts without any authorisation and consent of employees

Fin Dept officials clueless on GPF funds withdrawal

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The employees' union leaders met the Finance Department officials on Wednesday and asked for clarification on the withdrawal of employees' GPF funds. The APJAC and APJAC Amaravathi leaders met Finance Secretary SS Rawat and Satyanarayana and brought the issue to their notice. The Finance Department officials told the union leaders that

they were looking into the matter and assured them that they would discuss it with the department staff and give them clarity. The officials are of the view that technical glitch in the CFMS on depositing and withdrawing of cash in GPF accounts may also be a factor. The Finance Department officials said that the government did not take the funds from employees' GPF account, the union leaders said.

TAILOR-MURDER IN RAJASTHAN

Pak 'link' under investigation by NIA

PNS ■ JAIPUR/NEW DELHI

Investigators on Wednesday were looking into a possible link between one of the men who killed an Udaipur tailor and an Islamist outfit in Pakistan, as Rajasthan Police remained on vigil a day after the hate crime now being probed by the National Investigation Agency.

A policeman was slashed with a sword during a protest march in Rajsamand district's Bhim town,

where police used tear gas to stop a stone-pelting mob from advancing towards a mosque.

In Udaipur, hundreds took part in a funeral procession for Kanhaiya Lal - the tailor who was attacked Tuesday afternoon by two men who posted a video of the brutal attack with a cleaver on social media and claimed that they had avenged an insult to Islam.



analyse future emerging variants.

The WHO chief also voiced concern over the slow pace of vaccination in lower-income countries, making the at-risk population in those areas more vulnerable to future waves of the virus.

COVID cases on rise in 110 countries: WHO

PNS ■ UNITED NATIONS/GENEVA

The COVID-19 pandemic is changing but it is not over, head of the World Health Organization said on Wednesday, cautioning that the cases are on the rise in 110 countries and are being driven mainly by two fast-spreading Omicron sub-variants.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said this week that the fast-spreading Omicron sub-variants BA.4

and BA.5 together are estimated to make up half of the coronavirus cases in the United States. As of June 25, BA.5 made up 36.6 per cent of the total coronavirus cases in the US while BA.4 accounted for 15.7 per cent, together accounting for about 52 per cent of new cases in the US.

"On COVID-19, driven by BA.4 and BA.5 in many places, cases are on the rise in 110 countries, causing overall global cases to increase by 20 per cent

and deaths have risen in three of the six WHO regions even as the global figure remains relatively stable, WHO Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said.

He said the pandemic is changing but it's not over. We have made progress but it's not over.

Ghebreyesus said the ability to track the virus is under threat" as reporting and genomic sequences are declining, making it harder to track Omicron and

15 nominations filed for Prez poll

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As many as 115 nominations were filed till Wednesday, the last day of the filing papers for the July 18 presidential election, the Rajya Sabha Secretariat said.

The scrutiny of the nominations would be done on Thursday. Those who filed their papers include NDA nominee Droupadi Murmu and joint Opposition candidate Yashwant Sinha, who are the main contestants.

Besides them, a host of commoners have also filed their papers for the top constitutional post in the country.

Rs 2,516 cr scheme for PACS computerisation

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Wednesday decided to computerise all functional 63,000 Primary Agriculture Credit Societies (PACS) over the next five years with a budget outlay of Rs 2,516 crore in order to improve efficiency, transparency and accountability in their operations.

The scheme, approved by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, will also facilitate PACS to diversify their business and undertake multiple activities and services.

Majority of the PACS are not computerised and are still function-

ing manually, resulting in inefficiency and trust deficit in these societies.

Hailing the CCEA decision, Cooperation Minister Amit Shah said the government is committed to bring reforms in the cooperative sector.

Shah said the computerisation of PACS will prove to be a "boon" for the sector and thanked the prime minister for this visionary decision.

Announcing the Cabinet decision, Information and Broadcasting Minister Anurag Singh Thakur said the scheme proposes computerisation of about 63,000 functional PACS over a period of five years with a total budget outlay of Rs



2,516 crore, with the Centre's share of Rs 1,528 crore.

This is a landmark decision and

a big reform in this sector, he said, adding that the initiative will benefit 13 crore farmers, mostly small

and marginal.

Under the scheme, a cloud-based common software with cyber security and data storage will be put in place for PACS. It will also provide hardware support to the PACS and help in digitisation of existing records. This software will be in vernacular languages having flexibility of customisation as per the needs of states.

According to an official statement, PACS constitute the lowest tier of the three-tier Short Term Cooperative Credit (STCC) structure in the country comprising about 13 crore farmers as its members, which is crucial for the development of the rural economy.

Jagannath Rath Yatra to be held after 2 years

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Utkal Sanskrutika Samaj, a premier socio-cultural organisation of Odias residing in Visakhapatnam, has made elaborate arrangements for organising this year's annual Rath Yatra Festival on July 1.

The Samaj is reviving the nine-day celebration after making it a symbolic celebration during the past two years due to COVID-19 pandemic. The colourful procession of the chariot carrying the deities of Lord Jagannath, Sister Subhadra and Brother Balabhadra (Balarama) will be taken out from the Jagannath Temple Complex at Daspalla Hills (near All India Radio) to Gundicha Ghar, the aunt's place of Lord Jagannath near Shantiashtam.

Utkal Sanskrutika Samaj president and Orissa Stevedores Limited (OSL) Vice President JK Nayak told a media conference here on Wednesday that the festival will attract people from all walks of life and communities wherein they get the opportunity to offer prayers.

The festival has significance as for the first time Lord Jagannath comes to the streets



from the sanctum sanctorum to enable the common man to have darshan.

The chariot will be pulled by the devotees from the main temple at Daspalla Hills to the Gundicha Temple located in Lawsons Bay Colony passing through Children's Arena, Millennium Bunk, Andhra University Gate, Chinna Waltair, VUDA Park and Shanti Ashram.

The deities who after convalescing after Devasnana Poornima came out cured and will give darshan to devotees on June 29 Nava Jauban Darshan.

The deities will be decorated with Tulsi leaves Wednesday evening which is known as Tulasi Vsha/Besha as per the customs followed in world famous Puri Temple.

In the afternoon of July 1, the deities will be taken out from sanctum sanctorum to the chariot in a ritual called Pahandi Bije/After the traditional Chhera Pahanra (cleaning of the chariot) by Lal Saheb Pramod Bhanja Deo, member of erstwhile Daspalla royalty in the colourful chariot amid chanting of kirtans and Vedic hymns, music and chanting of Haribols.

The deities will have their sojourn in the Gundicha temple and will come back to the main temple, which is called Bahuda Yatra (Return Yatra). Ethnic delicacies like Poda Pitha, Chhena Poda and traditional Odia food will be offered as prasad during the nine-day festival. Utkal Sankskutika Samaj president JK Nayak and general secretary Bimal Kumar Mahanta urged the devotees to attend chariot-pulling ceremony and later in the daily rituals at the Gundicha Ghar in large numbers.

Explaining about the activities of the Samaj, they said they observe Odisha Formation Day on April 1 and other festivals of their State. As a responsible charitable organisation, the Samaj offers Narayan Seva (Poor Feeding) on every second Saturday of the month, conducts medical camps and blood donation camps regularly and rendered ration and financial support to migrant labourers who got stuck at various places after lockdown was imposed due to COVID-19. The Samaj also provides accommodation on the temple premises at affordable price to people coming on medical care to the city from various parts of Odisha.

Amounts erroneously credited to GPF accounts of employees: Govt

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The AP Finance Department has clarified that the DA arrear amounts were erroneously credited to the GPF account of the employees due to a technical glitch. Special Chief Secretary to the Government SS Rawat, in a rejoinder issued on Wednesday night, stated that the matter of unauthorised withdrawal of amounts from employees' GPF accounts has been referred to the Director of Treasury and Accounts (DTA) by the

Finance Department, GOAP for furnishing a detailed report. The statement said that the DA arrears bills which have the components of adjustment to GPF and payment in cash were sent to payment application for clearance after approval by the DTA as per the procedure. Even though the bills were not cleared in the payment application, the DA arrear amounts were erroneously credited to the GPF account of the employees due to a technical glitch.

The statement said that as per the treasury rules, all the bills which remain pending as on March 31 of every year shall be cancelled by the concerned Treasury Officer. Due to the cancellation of the unpaid DA arrear bills, the adjustment amounts which were erroneously credited to GPF accounts of employees were also reversed by the system software. It is clarified that, barring the above transactions, no other auto debits took place from the GPF account of any of the employ-

ees. It is further clarified that the government is taking necessary measures to rectify the technical glitch.

The DA arrears amount will be credited and reflected in the GPF accounts of employees as and when the DA Arrears are paid. The government is taking action for the payment of the DA arrears and other employee benefits at the earliest in a time-bound manner. The statement affirmed that no other auto debits have taken place from the GPF account of any of the employees.

400-year-old temple well in Zaheerabad to be restored

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The 400-year-old well at the Tulja Bhavani temple in Zaheerabad will be completely restored as part of programme to restore historic wells across the state.

The historic well at Tulja Bhavani temple is situated in Khanjamalapur, which is a small village hamlet in Zaheerabad in Medak district.

Hyderabad in top 2 cities with highest housing sales growth

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

As economic stability provides homebuyers with more confidence in their financial state, residential demand has picked up across the top eight cities, with both housing sales and new supply registering positive growth in the quarter ending April-June 2022.

A quarterly analysis of India's top eight residential markets by REA backed PropTiger.com, the recent spike in property prices has had little impact on homebuyer sentiment as outlook towards overall economic scenario and income stability improved in the post-coronavirus pandemic phase.

The markets covered in the report of Real Insight Residential, include Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Mumbai Metropolitan Region, Delhi-National Capital Region



and Pune.

"Though the RBI increased the repo rate twice during the quarter to bring it to 4.90%, home loans remained largely affordable for the period analysed. The biggest booster to housing demand has been the increased importance of owning a property which has been further backed by the consumer confidence in the overall economic scenario and impending income stability," said Vikas Wadhawan, Group CFO, Housing.com,

PropTiger.com & Makaan.com.

The housing sales during the quarter ending June 30, 2022 registered a sequential 5 per cent uptick when compared to the previous quarter (Q1 CY2022). According to the report, 74,330 units were sold across the top eight in Q2-2022 as compared to 70,620 units sold in Q1-2022.

The sharpest sequential increase in sales was witnessed in end-user driven markets of Ahmedabad at 30 per cent and Hyderabad, at 21 per cent, respectively.

5 foreigners deported

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad City Police and the Hyderabad Narcotics Enforcement Wing (H-NEW) arrested five foreign nationals for staying illegally in Hyderabad without any valid visa or passport. They were deported on Wednesday evening. Out of the five persons, three are from Nigeria and the remaining two are from Ivory Coast, a country in West Africa. After arresting them, the Hyderabad police forwarded a requisition to the Foreigners Regional Registration Office (FRRO) in Hyderabad asking for their deportation. After that, temporary travel documents were collected from their respective embassies in Delhi.

Police officers asked to keep tabs on movements of jailbirds

PNS ■ WARANGAL

City Police Commissioner Tarun Joshi has asked police officials to keep tabs on movements of the jailbirds and issued directions on how to resolve the pending grave cases and laid emphasis on effectively implementing visible policing.

Addressing a monthly crime meeting with east zone police officials of the east zone of the police commissionerate here on Wednesday, he sought information about the progress of cracking the pending cases from SHOs, circle inspectors and ACPs. He also reviewed the style of working of the officials and police personnel. He wanted the every SHO should implement standard operating procedures to solve the cases



Warangal Police Commissioner Tarun Joshi speaking at police officers' meeting in Warangal on Wednesday

filed with the police station. As it would be very easy for them to resolve the cases if they follow the procedures.

The police officials should speed up investigation of the pending grave cases, constitute special teams to nab the criminals and gather necessary evidence to prove the cases and submit the same to court.

Therefore, the investigation officers should technical evidence besides their skills in the investigation.

As part of the visible policing, patrolling should be conducted extensively under the limits of each police station. The rural police station personnel should compulsorily visit each and every village

under the station limits.

Awareness programmes on adverse impact of ganja, ID arrack, gutka, gambling should be conducted under the police station limits and important cross sections and in educational institutions under the police station limits. Each and every police station should take steps to install CCTV cameras at vantage points with the help of public support by creating necessary awareness among the people.

He asked the police to encourage the youth to take part in the police recruitment board to be held soon.

East Zone DCP Venkata Lakshmi, ACPs Sampat Rao, Naresh Kumar, Sivaramaiah, circle inspectors, inspectors, sub-inspectors and others took part in the meeting.

Dasoju demands ban on online loan apps, crackdown on organisers

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

All India Congress Committee (AICC) spokesperson Dasoju Sravan on Wednesday demanded that Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao immediately ban online loan apps. Sravan said the organisers of online loan apps have been inflicting unbearable harassment on gullible people and even resorting to illegal practices.

In a letter addressed to Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao on Wednesday, the AICC spokesperson urged the latter to constitute a special task force within the police department and order a crackdown on the online loan app organisers.

You are well aware that a dreaded and elongated Covid-19 pandemic has played havoc with people's lives in all spheres, including financially. Besides, declining economic growth, layoffs, rising inflation, lack of new job and entrepreneurial opportunities have pushed people into severe financial stress. During these troubled times, the traditional banking system, which needs to support the common people, has completely failed. As a result, many people have approached online loan apps for loans to attend to emergencies and difficult times, not knowing that they are getting into a murky web of harassment, fleeing and cheating.

He said the ideal solution would be the development of a pan-coronavirus vaccine that covers all the variants so far and potentially future ones. This is feasible, WHO continues to convene scientists and researchers and there has been a lot of research into this virus and understanding immunology overall," he said.

al links will be thoroughly investigated, it said.

The autopsy report showed 26 injury marks, including those caused by a sharp-edged weapon, on the tailor's body, police sources said.

Curfew imposed in seven police station areas in Udaipur continued in the morning but police allowed Kanhaiya Lal's funeral procession under a strict watch.

People joined on motorcycles and in cars joined along the way to the Ashok Nagar cremation ground.

All eyes on Modi's Bhimavaram meet

Continued from Page 1

Bhimavaram falls under Raju's Narsapur Lok Sabha segment. Raju has already approached the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) seeking protection during his visit to Bhimavaram on July 4 and also fears arrest by the local police if he visits his constituency.

Initial reports suggested that Jagan may skip the Prime Minister's programme as he would be in Paris.

But as per the Chief Minister's travel schedule, he will return from Paris on June 3 and will most likely attend the PM's programme the next day.

Notably, it has been almost two years since Raju visited his constituency as he fears arrest by the police in multiple cases. On July 4, as per the programme schedule, Modi will unveil a 30-feet statue of Alluri Seetarama Raju at SR Nagar in Bhimavaram as part of Azadi Ka Amrut Mahotsav and will address a public meeting.

"It is a prestige issue for MP

HC directs CID to prosecute MP Raghu Ramakrishna

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It further said the CID should confine its questioning only to the cases filed against the MP, but not with regard to other issues. It also directed that Raghu Ramakrishna Raju should not be called to the CID offices and everything should be done only in the presence of his lawyers. The court warned of stern action if the CID violated any of the directions of the court.

K Raghurama Krishna Raju to attend the programme in Bhimavaram and for the Chief Minister to prevent him from attending the programme. It would be really interesting to see if they would both share the dais and who will have an upper hand finally," said a political analyst.

4G-enabled e-PoS, iris devices deployed in fair price shops

PNS ■ RAJANNA SIRICILLA

In an effort to overcome poor network connectivity, the Telangana State government has deployed 4G-enabled electronic point of sale (e-PoS) and 4G-enabled iris devices in fair price shops.

District Additional Collector Kheemya Naik explained the features of the new e-PoS and iris devices to the dealers. The devices would

facilitate transparency in distribution of ration at fair price shops. The district administration, at a meeting held at the District Collectorate conference hall, distributed the 4G-enabled e-PoS and 4-G-enabled iris devices to 344 fair price shop dealers in the district. The Civil Supplies Department officials provided training to the fair price shop dealer on how to use the devices.

CHICKEN RATES ₹/KG

Dressed/With Skin	₹300
Without Skin	₹320
Broiler at Farm	₹169

EGG RATES ₹/100

VIJAYAWADA	385
HYDERABAD	385
VISAKHAPATNAM	410
RETAIL PRICE	₹3.85

Pakistan 'link' under investigation by NIA

Continued from Page 1

Stones were hurled at a burial ground and some people tried to vandalise its gate as the procession passed by. Elsewhere in Rajasthan, markets were closed in Sojat (Pali), Bhinmal and Sanchoor (Jalore) and Reodar (Sikar) in protest over the Udaipur murder.

Apart from the arrests of Riaz Akhtari, the man who

hacked at the tailor's neck, and Ghouse Mohammad, who filmed the crime, police have detained three others allegedly involved in the attack.

Rajasthan Director General of Police (DGP) M L Lather said Ghouse has links with Karachi-based Dawat-e-Islami and had visited the Pakistani city in 2014.

When asked whether the other accused too had connec-

tions with the Islamist organisation, Lather said that cannot be ruled out.

In Delhi, an official said Akhtari's links have been traced to Dawat-e-Islami, which has its branches in India as well.

A National Investigation Agency (NIA) team that had been rushed to Jaipur on Tuesday registered an FIR under the Unlawful Activities

(Prevention) Act. Rajasthan Police will assist the NIA, the state police chief said.

The Centre and the state government have termed the Udaipur murder as a terror incident.

The Union Home Ministry tweeted Wednesday that it has directed the NIA to take over the investigation.

"The involvement of any organisation and internation-

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Online banking services at KDCC Bank

TCS software inaugurated by its Chairman Nageswara Rao, APCOB MD Srinadh Reddy



Speaking on the occasion, APCOB MD Srinadh Reddy said that the TSC software was used for one year at the APCOB and later it is implemented at cooperative banks. With this TCS, all the cooperative banks would give GPay, Phonepe, BHIM and UPI etc digital services to their customers, he said.

tomers, he said. All the digital payments, net banking, mobile banking and aadhar enabled payment systems could become available within one month, he added.

He further said that all the Primary Agriculture Cooperative Societies (PACS) would be computerized very soon and every village would get a mini bank. As of now KDCC bank is in 4th place in the state by giving good services and with this online banking services, it would stand in first place among the country, he suggested. KDCC bank chairman Tanneru Nageswara

Rao said that RTGS and NEFT banking services continued without any problems in future while the TCS software and the co-operative banks customers would get better services. He thought that the KDCC bank would stand in a higher position in the country, he added. APCOB General Manager Rama Krishna, KDCC Bank directors NKS Prakasa Rao, P Sujatha, B Rani, CEO A Shyam Manohar, GMS BL Chandra sekhar, N Rangababu, Krishna cooperative bank chief manager R Rambabu, TCS staff attended.

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Krishna District Cooperative Central Bank (KDCCB) chairman Tanneru Nageswara Rao along with APCOB managing director (MD) R Srinadh Reddy inaugurated the new

TCS software and brought the online banking services to the cooperative banks' customers at the KDCC bank regional office in Vijayawada on Wednesday.

Speaking on the occasion, APCOB MD Srinadh Reddy

said that the TSC software was used for one year at the APCOB and later it is implemented at cooperative banks. With this TCS, all the cooperative banks would give GPay, Phonepe, BHIM and UPI etc digital services to their cus-

RPF holds awareness campaign against trespassing

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Railway Protection Force (RPF), Vijayawada Division, conducted an awareness campaign against trespassing/ track crossing at North and South ends of Vijayawada Railway Station on Wednesday. RPF staff educated the passengers on the dangers of crossing track, as well as walking along the track for reaching the platforms easily. Banners were erected against track crossing and trespassing on either ends at Vijayawada station to alert the passengers.

Valleswara B Thokala, Senior Divisional Security Commissioner, said that trespassing on the railway premises, including the track, was a punishable offence under Section 147 of the Railways Act, 1989, with imprisonment up to six months and/or a fine of up to ₹1,000. He said during the current year, 183 cases were registered against trespassing and



an amount of Rs. 49,800 was collected.

Valleswara appealed to the passengers to use the foot over bridges and refrain from track crossings and trespassing. He said that people were risking their valuable lives by choosing shortcuts, using mobile phones and other electronic gadgets

while crossing the track, violating safety and cautionary instructions and also indirectly affecting punctuality and causing hindrance to train operations. He urged the public to shun the practice of trespassing/ track crossing and cooperate with the Railways.

He said that regular

announcements and awareness and safety rallies were taken up across the Vijayawada Division every month, to prevent the passenger from trespassing. He also said that Railway Protection Force personnel were being additionally deployed on locations vulnerable to trespass across the division.

Women's cricket teams selection on July 3

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Krishna District Cricket Association (KDCA) will conduct the selection trials for the women's teams of all age groups, at the Indira Gandhi Municipal Corporation (IGMC) stadium in Vijayawada on July 3. According to KDCA secretary M Ravindra Chowdary, Under-16, Under-19, Under-23 and senior teams will be selected after the trials. The players who were born on or after September 1, 2006, are eligible to take part in the Under-16 girls' team selections, he said. Girls born on or after September 1, 2003, can try for the U-19 team while U-23 team members should be born on or after September 1, 1999.

VMC Commissioner inspects works in vehicle depot

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Vijayawada Municipal Corporation Commissioner Swapnil Dinkar Pundkar on Wednesday inspected the progress of modernisation work undertaken at the Vehicle Depot at Hanumanpet in Vijayawada and gave various instructions to the authorities.

During the visit, the Commissioner instructed the engineering officials to take

measures to clear the toilets on the railway compound wall on the depot premises and told to build at the rear side of the depot and complete the road patch works in front of the mechanical shed. He further told the concerned authorities to take steps to arrange painting and railing to the wall around the diesel tank. The Commissioner suggested that the concerned staff take up appropriate repairs to the dam-

aged areas of the drain at the vehicle depot, removing the wall behind the store room and repairing and painting the compound wall between the depot and the railway stadium. He told the staff to set up a divider at the entrance gate of the vehicle depot and lay CC road by increasing the road width.

Executive Engineer K Kote shwara Rao and Stores in Charge Yogendra were present.

Red Cross officials visit kidney patients in West NTR Dist

Red Cross to set up blood storage point

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The team of Red Cross Blood Bank officials visited A Konduru and Thiruvor towns of NTR district on Wednesday on the advice of the District Collector to mitigate the shortage of blood for patients undergoing dialysis. The team led by BVS Kumar, State Coordinator, Red Cross Blood Banks visited the affected patients and interacted with the Medical Officers in Government and Private hospitals, where the dialysis was being carried out.

Nearly 50 chronic patients

in the Thiruvor area are being advised for dialysis once or twice a week. Some patients, whose hemoglobin percentage is falling below 5 or 6 are being transfused with blood.

Since, there is no Blood Bank in their vicinity, patients are forced to go to far off places in search of blood and some middlemen are encashing the emergency and charging abnormally for the blood. They are also being pressured to provide blood replacement with their friends or relatives, which is becoming a difficult task to locate blood donors for every dialysis. BVS

Kumar has assured that the Red Cross will come to their rescue and provide blood at any time without any replacement at the Government suggested processing charges. He also said that he will discuss with the District Collector and request him to direct the Drugs Department to permit the Red Cross Blood Center to establish a Blood Storage point in Thiruvor. If a Blood Storage Point is established in Thiruvor, it will be a great relief to the patients undergoing dialysis. He said that he will submit a detailed report to the Collector soon.

Students, youth stage dharna against 'Agnipath'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Students and youth organisations staged a dharna demanding withdrawal of the 'Agnipath' scheme, which was announced by the Union government recently, at Dharna Chowk in Vijayawada on Wednesday. They shouted slogans against the Agnipath and Central government.

AISF State president Johnson Babu, secretary Sivareddy, SFI State president Prasanna, PDSU State president Ravi Chandra, DYFI State president Ramanna and secretary Suryarao led the protesters.

Speaking on the occasion, the leaders said that the unemployed youth were expecting to be recruited to the vacant posts in the Central government departments. However, Prime Minister Narendra Modi was selling the jobs to private persons. Lakhs of Army aspirants have passed

They shouted slogans against the Agnipath and Central government

the physical and medical fitness tests and are waiting for the written test, he said.

They alleged that the Union government had not conducted written examinations for the past four years and was neglecting the unemployed youth. The leaders condemned the Union government decision to privatise the Army, which was the key segment in the Defence Ministry.

The student and youth leaders said that those selected might be removed after four years of service. Most of the youth want to join the Army and serve the country, but with the 'Agnipath' rules and conditions, their dream may remain unfulfilled, they said.

Security and Protection of offshore assets reviewed

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The 46th Regional Contingency Committee Meeting to review the security and protection of offshore assets was conducted at Eastern Naval Command (ENC) Headquarters, in Vizag on Wednesday. ENC

Chief of Staff Vice Admiral Sanjay Vatsayan chaired the meeting which was attended by representatives from various stakeholders namely Indian Navy, ICG CISE, IB, Marine Police, State Police, Customs, Fisheries, ONGC and other oil authorities. The Regional

Contingency Committee Meeting is conducted biannually in rotation by the Indian Navy and Oil producing agencies to discuss the offshore security measures and Protection of Oil Rigs.

The challenges faced by oil rigs were discussed and

workable solutions have been suggested by supporting agencies. The session ended with an intent to increase the number of such review meetings to enhance the security of our offshore energy assets through a robust integrated coastal security organization.

DRM inspects Gunupur-Naupada section

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The East Coast Railway's Waltair Divisional Railway Manager (DRM) Anup Satpathy on Wednesday inspected the Gunupur-Naupada section. With focus on safety aspects, the DRM conducted window trailing inspection from Visakhapatnam to Naupada station. He took stock of various amenities and facilities provided at the stations in Naupada-Gunupur section and ongoing developmental activities in that section. He inspected stations and var-



ious establishments at important stations in the section.

Representations from the public on various issues were taken

at stations Naupada, Temburu, Patha patnam, Pathapatnam, Paralakhemundi, Kashinagar, Hadu bangi and Gunupur stations. DRM interacted with the public and staff to know their requirements, amenities and grievances. During his inspection, the DRM interacted with the passengers, public on the platforms and took their feedback on the facilities. ZRUCC & DRUCC member SP Panda met DRM at Gunupur Station. DRM interacted with the public, representatives of various associations and media persons.

Kodali lashes out at Naidu

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP MLA and former minister Kodali Venkateswara Rao (Nani) has lashed out at TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu and a section of the media for propagating false information against the State government.

Speaking to the media at the party central office here on Wednesday, the MLA said Naidu, Pawan Kalyan and yellow media were on one stand and trying by all means to defame the government and Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy. He said they are behind burning chariots, destroying statues, creating rifts among religions and castes and politicising deaths.

He came down heavily on Naidu and Pawan Kalyan for propagating false information on liquor and medicines of Aurobindo Pharma company that they were adulterated. He said no adulteration was

He came down heavily on Naidu and Pawan Kalyan for propagating false information on liquor and medicines of Aurobindo Pharma company that they were adulterated

done in Aurobindo Pharma, which has manufacturing units in 24 locations.

He said that it was Naidu who owned Heritage Foods which was banned in Kerala and Tamil Nadu in 2012 for adulteration of milk. He also slammed Naidu and yellow media for propagating false information on MP V Vija yasai Reddy and his daughter with regard to a cruise ship in Vishakhapatnam.

Achieve OTS targets, officials told

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

NTR District Collector S Dilli Rao has said that the officials of Revenue and Housing departments should achieve the targets of One Time Settlement (OTS) as part of Jagananna Shasvatha Gruha Hakku scheme. He made it clear that there should be no dissimilarities between online and offline data.

Dilli Rao conducted a video-conferencing along with DRO K Mohan Kumar and Krishna ZP CEO PS Surya Prakash with all the Revenue Divisional Officers (RD), Mandal Special Officers, MPDOs, Tahsildars and Housing Department officers on Wednesday.

He asked the officials to use the panchayat secretaries' services to achieve the OTS tar-



gets. "Tahsildars should approve the OTS process without delay and complete the printing process, documentation and VRO approval later. Then, complete the scanning process after getting approval of panchayat secretaries, who

are equal to joint sub-registrars," he added.

He further said that Tahsildars, MPDOs and special officers should go on field visits and solve the problems that people were facing. Issues regarding server, internet facil-

ity, power etc. must be resolved on the spot to speed up the OTS process, he said.

He suggested that panchayat secretaries collect Aadhaar cards, photos etc. with the help of volunteers. "People should be aware of their rights and officers should explain the uses of the documents to them," he said.

Collector visits Gudavalli Sachivalayam After the video conferencing, the Collector visited the Gudavalli Sachivalayam of Vijayawada Rural mandal and inspected the Solid Waste Management Centre (SWMC) and construction of the Grama Sachivalayam buildings along with MPDO J Suneetha, Tahsildar B Sai Srinivas and Sarpanch K Samundra Veni.

He enquired about the ser-

vices of Sachivalayam employees. He also verified the records and the beneficiaries' list displayed at the Sachivalayam.

Later, he said that Sachivalayam employees should create awareness among the people on the development and welfare schemes being implemented by the State government. Regarding the petitions received at the Sachivalayam, the staff should resolve the problems without delay, he said. He further said that villages should be kept clean and green with the help of people and people's representatives.

Gudavalli MPTC member G Venkata Reddy, Panchayat Raj DEE Srinivas, AER Sivarama Krishna and Panchayat Secretary Mastan Rao were present.

Chandrababu is blind to progress in AP: Kodali Nani

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Former minister and Gudivada MLA Kodali Sri Venkateswara Rai (Nani) has wondered whether the development programmes being implemented by Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy are not visible to the eyes of the Opposition parties. Speaking at the YSRCP Plenary Sessions held in Machilipatnam on Wednesday, Kodali Nani lauded CM Jagan as a great chief minister who was implementing what was not mentioned in the manifesto.

Addressing the gathering at Machilipatnam, Kodali Nani said Chandrababu Naidu had lost mental balance and could-



n't remember what he spoke. "For the present setup and the gestures of Lokesh, 'Siddappa' is the appropriate name," said Nani. He said that Chandrababu's adopted son

Pawan Kalyan launched the Jana Sena Party only to see the TDP in power and Chandrababu as CM. He further said that the TDP-supported 'yellow media' was also waiting for the party to come to power to loot the State.

The former minister made some interesting comments during the plenary and appealed to the people of Machilipatnam to support Purni Venkataramaiah or his son Purni Krishna Murthy whoever contests the next elections. The people should support the heir (varasudu) and not the son-in-law (Illarikam Alludu Kollu Ravindra) in the next elections, he said.

Welfare schemes will ensure election victory of YSRCP: Leaders

PNS ■ NARASARAOPET

The YSRCP leaders including minister Ambati Rambabu, Youth wing president Byreddy Siddhartha Reddy and MLA Kasu Mahesh Reddy exhorted the activists to work with the same spirit and enthusiasm till the end of the next election and ensure a landslide victory.

The YSRCP organised constituency level plenary at Kondamodu village at Sattenapalli on Wednesday.

Addressing the activists, minister for Water Resources Ambati Rambabu said that the welfare schemes being implemented for the poor would ensure the massive victory of the YSRCP in the next elections. He exhorted the YSRCP cadres to work with the same spirit and enthusiasm till the next elections and ensure a landslide victory for the party.

He said that Chief Minister Y S Jagan MOhan Reddy had



brought many reforms and provided efficient and transparent governance.

"The YSRCP is blowing the poll bugle in the plenary. Chandrababu Naidu can face elections alone, or he can come with Likes, or with Pawan Kalyan. The people will wind up the TDP", he said, and asked the activists to maintain the same spirit and enthusiasm till the end of the elections.

Rambabu explained that the YSRCP regime during the last three years had spent Rs 1.80 lakh crore to implement various welfare schemes. Under some of the schemes money has directly been credited into the accounts of beneficiaries, he said. The benefits of welfare schemes are being extended to all beneficiaries irrespective of their political party affiliations, he claimed. The YSRCP

should win all the seven Assembly seats in the Palnadu district and the activists should strive hard for the same, he called upon the cadres. Macherla MLA Pinnella Ramakrishna Reddy alleged that former MLA and TDP leader Yarapathineni is making baseless allegations against the YSRCP regime. He dared him for an open debate on the allegations and other issues. He

warned him of dire consequences if he continues to criticise Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy.

The MLA lauded the Chief Minister stating that he is striving hard to fulfil the assurances which he had given to the people. YSRCP Youth Wing president Byreddy Siddhartha Reddy exuded confidence that Jagan Mohan Reddy would be voted to power again in the election. He made it clear that he would continue to support Jagan Mohan Reddy.

MLAs Kasu Mahesh Reddy, Namburi Shankar Rao and government advisor Battula Brahmananda Reddy and YSRCP state secretary Nimmakayala Rajanarayana were among those who attended the plenary. Earlier a grand welcome was accorded to Byreddy Siddhartha Reddy. He was brought to the venue in a huge rally from Nandigama Auto road.



JAGANANNA COLONIES

Collector sore at discrepancy among houses

PNS ■ GUNTUR

District Collector M Venugopal Reddy expressed anger over the officials on the discrepancy between the houses sanctioned in the layout and the DPR sent by the housing authorities.

The Collector on Wednesday inspected the houses which are under construction at Siripuram village in Medikonduru mandal. He questioned Siripuram Housing AE Prakash Rao on the discrepancy between the houses sanctioned in the layout and the DPR sent by the housing authorities. The AE failed to give proper details to the Collector who directed the Housing PD to take action against the AE. The Collector warned of action if there is dereliction in duty.

The housing officials told the Collector that houses were sanctioned in 291 plots in Siripuram of which the construction of 181 houses reached to the level of BBL, the construction 65 houses reached up to the BL and the

construction of one house reached up to the roof level.

The Collector said that the housing authorities should coordinate with the Tahsildar and the MPDO to resolve minor issues arising out of the lay-outs related to the construction of houses, and that all the authorities should take special care to expedite the construction to bring to their immediate attention the issues that need to be resolved at the district level.

The power department officials were directed to immediately replace the 11 KV high tension wires that were horizontal across the lay out. The Housing officials, the Tahsildar and the MPDO were directed to take steps to ensure timely supply of sand and other material required for construction of houses.

The secretaries of the secretariat were directed to make the beneficiaries fully aware of the need to expedite the construction of houses in the lay-out. Steps should be taken to ensure that the construction of houses is uploaded online

from time to time without any delay and the bills are sanctioned to the beneficiaries, the Collector told the officials.

The Collector directed the officials concerned to construct approach roads to the colonies and level the low level areas. He asked the officials to construct drains to drain out the rain water from the colonies. The officials concerned should monitor the process constantly, the Collector instructed.

Collector Venugopal Reddy inspected the Siripuram Village Secretariat 1. He also saw the promotional posters of government schemes set up in the premises of the Secretariat, the list of beneficiaries of welfare schemes displayed for citizen charter and social audit.

"The government gives Rs 1.80 lakh for the construction of houses and Rs 30,000 is being extended by banks at 25 paise interest rate to the beneficiaries", he said and asked the beneficiaries to avail the facilities and complete the construction of houses in the colonies.

Elusive tiger strays into Anakapalli district

PNS ■ KAKINADA

The Royal Bengal tiger, which has been elusive to the forest officials for the last 40 days and roaming in Prathipadu region in the district, strayed into Anakapalli district on Wednesday.

Some villagers spotted the tiger at T Jagampeta village in Yelamanchilipalem where it killed a buffalo. The forest officials expect that the tiger would enter Visakhapatnam district in the next few days. The forest officials collected pug marks of the tiger Muruvada village in Tuni mandal.

The forest officials installed a large number of CCTVs and



placed cages to capture the tiger but escaped from entering into the cages. Forest ranger Dharma Raju said that the villagers in the mandal were alerted.

Alluri Sitarama Raju statue getting finishing touches in ASR park

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

The 30-feet tall bronze statue of freedom fighter Alluri Sitarama Raju, which is to be unveiled by Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi on June 4, was installed on a pedestal and final touches are being given to the statue.

The 30-feet bronze statue was installed in the ASR municipal park premises. The officials and the Kshatriya Seva Samithi leaders are monitoring the final touches being given to the statue. The statue was installed on a 7-feet tall pedestal after performing pooja on Tuesday. The Kshatriya Seva Samithi leaders here on Wednesday said that



10 tonnes of bronze and five tonnes of iron were used to make the 30-feet tall Alluri Sitarama Raju statue and Rs 3

crore was spent for the making of the statue, they informed. This is the tallest statue of freedom fighter Alluri Sitarama Raju in the state. The statue was made with the cooperation of Alluri Sitarama Raju of Agarru village in Palkollu mandal, they said. The works are underway to beautify the park. West Godavari Collector P Prashanti, SP U Ravi Prakash and Azadika Amrit Utsav committee chairman and Bhimavaram MLA Grandhi Srinivas inspected the arrangements being made for the Prime Minister's visit here today. The Prime Minister will unveil the statue of the freedom fighter as part of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav.

Development works worth Rs 21cr. launched in mining areas hit

PNS ■ KAKINADA

Collector Kritika Shukla informed that developmental Rs 21.05 Crores worth development works were taken up in the areas affected by the mining operations.

The Collector reviewed the progress works being carried out at a meeting on Wednesday. Speaking on the occasion the Collector said 10 KMs of area was directly affected while another 10.25 KMs of area was indirectly

affected by the mining activity and necessary developmental works were being taken up in the areas with the district mining foundation funds.

The Collector explained that a total of 32 developmental works were taken up at a cost of Rs.21.05 Crores and every effort should be made to complete them expeditiously avoiding delays. She also advised the officials to propose new works identifying the requirement based on the

field studies. Approval was accorded for taking up three works costing Rs. 31.91 lakhs in K V Mallavaram, Kottam villages of Kotananduru mandal in Peddapuram jurisdiction of Yeleru irrigation division. 'These works should be grounded expeditiously', the Collector added. Joint Collector Ilakkiya, Zilla Parishad CEO Satyanarayana, Mines and geology Deputy Director Narasimha Reddy and DRDA project director Sriramani were among those who were present.

Civic chief warns of action if buildings constructed without plan

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Municipal Commissioner Keerthi Chekuri warned of stringent action against those who construct multi-storeyed buildings without approval of plan. The Commissioner inspected the buildings of those who applied for No Objection Certificate which were constructed recently at StambalaGaruvu area on Wednesday.

She personally took the measurements of a building and inspected whether the building was constructed as per the approved plan. Speaking on the occasion, she said that those



who want to construct multi-storeyed buildings must get the

approved plans by the GMC and take NOC certificates from

the relevant departments. If the building was constructed as per approval of plan then only the fit for occupancy certificate would be issued. She made it clear that occupancy certificates would not be issued if construction was made in the setback portion, road widening portion or the height of the building was increased.

The rain harvest pits should be built in such a manner that they work efficiently but not for formality. Space should be left for growing greenery in the premises as per the plan in case multi-storeyed buildings and ramps should be constructed to de-silt the drainage canals.

While speaking to the planning secretaries, Keerthi Chekuri asked them to monitor whether buildings being constructed in the secretariat level as per the plan.

She asked to issue notices to those who construct buildings without plans and take necessary action against the violators. She directed them to install water meters to the multi-storeyed buildings and assess the property tax by coordinating with the secretariats. In-charge City Planner Babu Rao, ACP Ajay Kumar, TPS Bhavani and secretariat secretaries were among those who accompanied her.

SP pats cops for getting rape victim punished by court

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Superintendent of police Malika Garg appreciated the police officials concerned for their action in getting a rape accused punished by the court.

The SP said that A Chennaiah (40) raped a minor girl and a case under POCSO Act Cr.No 15/18 was registered in the Markapuram town police station. The police team led by Markapuram CI Bhima Naik, monitored by Disha SI Rajia Sultana, court lesion ASI Venkata Swamy and POCSO constable Yalamanda ensured that the court sentenced the rape accused to life imprisonment. The SP appreciated the police personnel and presented appreciation letters for the efficient monitoring of the case which ensured the court

The SP appreciated the police personnel and presented appreciation letters for the efficient monitoring of the case which ensured the court sentenced the rape accused to life imprisonment and Rs 4000 fine



sentenced the rape accused to life imprisonment and Rs 4000 fine. On the occasion, the SP said that special measures were being taken to prevent harassment and sexual assault of minors, adding that a special

POCSO case monitoring team had been set up to ensure that perpetrators of child rape could not escape the law under any

circumstances and that efforts were being made to ensure severe punishment for the perpetrators through effective trial

monitoring in court. Additional SP (Admin) K S Nageshwara Rao was among those who were present.

Over 3.18 lakh people downloaded Disha App in Bapatla district

PNS ■ BAPATLA

Bapatla Superintendent of police Vakul Jindal said that 3,18,540 people had downloaded the Disha Apps in Bapatla district so far.

In order to expedite the Disha app downloads in the district, the SP launched innovative programs like Disha App Download Special Drive, Disha App Mega Drive, Best Woman Police and Disha Lucky Draw Contest across the district. The district SP said that the state government has ambitiously created the Disha app for the protection of women, which would only be effective when it is stored on a



mobile phone. "We have launched innovative programs like Mega Drive, Best Woman Police and Disha app Lucky Draw Contest. Till now 3,18,540 Disha apps have been downloaded since the formation of Bapatla district and about 10,354 Disha apps

downloaded today in the special drive programme", the SP said. The SP said the Disha app is useful not only for women, but also for everyone as no one could imagine what the danger would happen. At the time of the problem, the Disha App would be useful is for immediate assistance from the police. The police personnel after receiving the message for help from the Disha app would reach the place the 10 minutes and rescue those in danger. "The Disha app is like a powerful weapon for the protection of women and all should download the same use when in trouble", the SP said.

531 abandoned vehicles auctioned

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Rachakonda Police Commissionerate auctioned 531 abandoned vehicles and handed over Rs 43 lakh to the finance department. It is a six months process of leaving vehicles for the owners to claim and all the vehicles which were neglected had been arranged for auction. The police also waited for extra time to return the two-wheelers which were collected from no-parking zones, some left at crime scenes and a few caught in drunk-and-drive cases. If

In the auction also original owners come and take their vehicles.

people claim they are asked to submit documents and after scrutiny the vehicles are returned. In the auction also original owners come and take their vehicles. "On Wednesday the auction of abandoned vehicles under Rachakonda Police Commissionate was held at

Car Headquarters, Amberpet parade grounds. Information has been given to the public in newspapers regarding the auction and citizens participated actively in the auction. During the auction, 531 abandoned vehicles which are road worthy, including three-wheeler vehicles were made available to the participants. All the vehicles were placed in the auction as per Section 39(b), R/w Act 7 of Cyberabad / Rachakonda and Section 40 and 41, Hyderabad City Police Act 1348E", said Addl DCP Shameer.

4 foreigners held for drug peddling

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Sleuths of Hyderabad Narcotic Enforcement Wing (H-NEW) arrested four foreign nationals for overstaying and being involved in drug peddling.

Their overstay has also been notified to the Foreign Regional Registration Office (FRRO) and they have suggested the police to initiate legal proceedings against them. The police also seized 110 grams of Methamph



amine, 20 grams of Cocaine and 5 mobile phones, all worth Rs 13 lakh. A case under Section 14 of Foreigners Act

and Section 2 of the Passport Act has been registered at the Banjara Hills police station. The police have identified six

accused of whom four have been caught and two are absconding. The accused belong to Nigeria, Tanzania and Yemen, all of whom are residing illegally in Hyderabad.

According to the police, the accused frequently visited Bangalore and procured drugs like Meth and Cocaine at Rs 5000-6000 per gram and sell it at Rs 10,000 per gram in Hyderabad. As of now, 23 consumers have also been

identified and the police will soon start taking action against them, said City Police Commissioner CV Anand.

The seized material has been handed over to SHO, Banjara Hills police station for further investigation. The arrests were made under the supervision of Chakravarthy Gummi, DCP H-NEW, P Rajesh, Inspector Mohd Hafeez Uddin, Inspector Banjara Hills PS and the team from H-NEW and Banjara Hills police station.

INDIA CORNER

Govt taking steps to reduce no of road accidents: V K Singh

The government is taking a series of steps to reduce the number of road accidents in the country and is also working on creating helipads at wayside amenities that are coming up along the expressways to provide emergency care, Union minister V K Singh said on Wednesday. Addressing an event here, the minister of state for road transport and highways said that the government has placed ambulances at each toll plaza on highways but more needs to be done in this area. We are trying to create helipads in each one of our wayside amenities that are coming up along the expressways. It will have helipad facility and hospitals can set up trauma centres at these locations, he said. The minister noted that 11 per cent of world accidents happen in India and "we need to work to bring down the number of road accidents to 2 lakhs per year from current 5 lakhs". This can be rectified and brought down if all stakeholders work together, he stated.



Thousands witness Lord Jagannath's 'Nabajaubana'

Thousands of devotees Wednesday thronged the 12th century 'Sri Mandir' here to witness the Nabajaubana (The Holy Sight of Juvenile Youth) of Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra and Devi Subhadra after a gap of two years due to the pandemic. The state government allowed the people to congregare at the temple after the decline in the prevailing pandemic. As per the tradition the deities remained in the Anasar Gruha (the sick room) inside the temple after their ritual bath on Snan Purnima day. It is believed that the Holy Trinity appears in youthful form on this day after recovering from fever induced by the bath. As per the schedule issued by Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA), Parimanik (paid) darshan was held for an hour from 8 am to 9 am after the temple opened in the morning.



After 3-year gap, Amarnath Yatra all set to begin today

The 43-day Amarnath Yatra to the holy cave shrine located in south Kashmir Himalayas is all set to begin on Thursday after a gap of three years. All arrangements have been put in place by the Shri Amarnath Shrine Board (SASB) to ensure smooth pilgrimage to the naturally formed ice-lingam at the cave shrine, officials said. Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Wednesday morning flagged off the first batch of pilgrims from Jammu base camp. The first batch of 4,890 pilgrims left around 4 am from the Bhagwati Nagar base camp for Kashmir Valley in a cavalcade of 176 light and heavy vehicles, the officials said. The Jammu and Kashmir administration is also augmenting the efforts of the shrine board by providing foolproof security cover along both the Pahalgam and Baital routes to the holy cave, a senior official said.



India needs to form Green Hydrogen Corridors: NITI Aayog

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India needs to form Green Hydrogen Corridors and governments can look at providing grants to startups as well as support entrepreneurs to promote green hydrogen, NITI Aayog said on Wednesday.

In a report titled 'Harnessing Green Hydrogen - Opportunities for Deep Decarbonisation in India', the Aayog also suggested that there is a need to facilitate investment through demand aggregation and dollar-based bidding for green hydrogen.

"Three hydrogen corridors should be developed across the country based on state grand challenges... The governments can provide grants and loans to startups and projects, support entrepreneurs through incubators and investor networks, and put in place regulations that manage first-mover risks," the report said. The govern-



ment can also use public procurement and purchase incentives (for green hydrogen) to create demand in niche markets and crowd in private investment, it added.

The report suggested that th government should promote

export of green hydrogen and green hydrogen-embedded products through a global hydrogen alliance.

Green Hydrogen/ Green Ammonia is defined as hydrogen/ ammonia produced by way of electrolysis of water

using renewable energy, including renewable energy which has been banked and the hydrogen/ammonia produced from biomass.

Most large economies including India have committed to net zero targets. The

report predicted that hydrogen demand in India could grow more than four-fold by 2050, representing almost 10 per cent of global hydrogen demand. In the longer term, steel and heavy-duty trucking are likely to drive the majority of demand growth, accounting for almost 52 per cent of total demand by 2050, it added.

Emphasising that the roadmap should also identify a timeline and scale of manufacturing support for electrolyzers, the report said, "India may aim for 25 GW of electrolyzers by 2030, while also investing USD 1 billion in R&D to catalyse the development of commercial green hydrogen technologies across the value chain."

It noted that radically improving the speed of regulatory clearances coupled with preferential treatment in public tenders will help catalyse local manufacturing.

Assam flood situation worsens, 24.9 lakh people affected

PNS ■ GUWAHATI

The flood situation in Assam worsened on Wednesday following incessant rain, with five more people losing their lives in the deluge and the number of affected people rising to 24.92 lakh, while Silchar town in Cachar district continued to remain inundated for the last 10 days, officials said.

The MeT Department has issued a 'red alert' in the districts of Kokrajhar, Chirang and Baksa, and an 'orange alert' in Dhubri, Barpeta, Bongaigaon, Udalguri, Biswanath, Lakhimpur, Dhemaji and Dibrugarh. The weather office has also issued an 'orange alert' in South Salmara, Kokrajhar, Chirang and Baksa districts till Thursday. Five fresh fatalities have taken the total number of deaths due to floods and landslides in Assam this year to 139, while three more people have been reported missing, a bulletin issued by the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA) said. Brahmaputra, Beki, Kopili, Barak and Kushiyara rivers were flowing above the danger level in



some places although most of the remaining rivers were showing a receding trend.

Most localities of Silchar were still water-logged and the situation remained critical with residents facing a shortage of food, drinking water and medicines.

The town has remained submerged for the last 10 days due to breach of a dyke in Bethkundi. Deputy Comm issioner Keerthi Jalli said work is underway to repair it. She said priority was being given to reach out to the affected people with clean drinking water and food while medical

camps are being organised by the health department to ensure prevention of water-borne diseases.

A team of the National Health Mission, Assam, led by its Mission Director M S Lakshmi Priya is also camping at Silchar to ensure that the affected people get proper medical facilities.

Medical personnel have been deployed in the 28 municipal wards of the town, while health camps have been organised at different relief centres where inmates have been provided with ORS packets for prevention of diarrhoea.

Shinde, rebel Sena MLAs our guests : Assam govt



PNS ■ GUWAHATI

Assam government Wednesday said rebel Shiv Sena leader Eknath Shinde and other Maharashtra dissidents who are camping in Guwahati for a week are "guests" of the state. Assam Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pijush Hazarika said that the dissident MLAs of the western state are being treated as guests and assistance is being provided to them.

Hazarika, who is also the government spokesperson, BJP MP from Assam Pallab Lochan Das, MLA Diganta Kalita and Guwahati Police Joint Commissioner Partha Sarathi Mahanta on Wednesday accompanied the rebel legislators in the bus journey from their upscale hotel in the city to Kamakhya

temple. "They (the dissident Maharashtra MLAs) told the administration that they would like to visit Maa Kamakhya temple. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma then assigned me to assist them because they are our guests," Hazarika told reporters. "It is the duty of the state government to help any guest coming to the state," he added.

To questions on the number of lawmakers camping in the hotel and when they are likely to leave, Hazarika said "I do not know how many MLAs are there. I am not aware of their plans."

Dissident legislators of Shiv Sena, which heads the ruling coalition in Maharashtra, along with several Independents have been camping in Guwahati, around 2,700 km away from Mumbai, since June 22.

Huge security for July 1 rath yatra in Ahmedabad

PNS ■ AHMEDABAD

As many as 25,000 security personnel will be deployed on the route of the forthcoming Lord Jagannath rathayatra in Ahmedabad in which lakhs of people are likely to participate after a gap of two years without COVID-19 restrictions, officials said on Wednesday. Union Home Minister Amit Shah will perform the Mangla Aarti at the temple on July 1 around 4 am before the chariots of the deities roll out. In normal times, lakhs of people gather along the route of the rathayatra on the day of 'Ashadhi Beej' to catch a glimpse of deities and the procession, which includes decorated elephants and several tableaux. Traditionally, the procession, led by chariots, starts around 7 am on 'Ashadhi Beej' from the 400-year-old temple in the Jamalpur area of the city and returns by 8 pm after passing through the Old City, including some communally sensitive areas. "With lakhs of people from across Gujarat are expected to attend the 145th Lord Jagannath Rathayatra here on July 1, at least 25,000 security personnel will be deployed on the entire city to thwart any untoward incident," officials said.

CBI announces reward on TMC MP Banerjee's confidant

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI has announced a reward of Rs one lakh for anyone giving actionable information leading to arrest of TMC MP Abhishek Banerjee's alleged confidant Vinay Mishra, who is wanted in a cattle smuggling case, officials said Wednesday. The central agency had issued a similar reward against Mishra



in a case of coal pilferage from the mines of Eastern Coalfields Ltd in West Bengal's Asansol a few

months ago, they said. The CBI had also moved Interpol seeking a Red Notice against Mishra and attempts are

CRPF booths to help Amarnath pilgrims

PNS ■ JAMMU

To assist the Amarnath pilgrims, the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) has established 'Madadgar' booths across Jammu and Kashmir, a spokesperson of the paramilitary force said on Wednesday. The 43-day annual pilgrimage is scheduled to commence Thursday from the twin base camps - the traditional 48-km Nunwan in south Kashmir's Anantnag and a 14-km shorter Baltal in central Kashmir's Ganderbal district - after a gap of two years following the outbreak of COVID-19.

The CRPF spokesperson said help desks have been set



up at various places along the route, and at transit and base camps. The force has also established a medical camp along the pilgrimage route to provide free treatment, he said.

The first batch of 4,890 pilgrims, who left the Bhagwati Nagar base camp in Jammu under tight security arrangements in the early hours of Wednesday, have reached their

respective base camps in the Valley to start their onward journey. The spokesperson said all efforts have been made to ensure their safety and security and their convoys in view of a heightened threat perception and statements by various terror groups to disturb the pilgrimage. "The force has left no stone unturned to take up the challenge...the surveillance of every inch is being made by the vigilant jawans, who are also using drone 'Netra' to keep the pilgrims safe," he said.

The spokesperson said the pilgrims leaving the base camp on the first day were excited and expressed full faith in the CRPF's capability.

Udaipur incident: Kerala Guv against Madrassa curriculum

PNS ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

A day after the brutal murder of a tailor in Rajasthan triggered shock waves across the country, Kerala Governor Arif Mohammed Khan on Wednesday came out against Madrassas and wondered whether young children were taught there that punishment for blasphemy is beheading. He also called for broad-based education to every child till the age of 14 years, saying it was one of their basic rights and opined that no specialised education should be given to them before that age.

Encourage students to be curious, innovative: VP

PNS ■ CHENNAI

Imploring educators to pay attention to imparting education in one's mother tongue, Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu on Wednesday fervently appealed to schools across the nation to foster the spirit of curiosity, innovation and excellence among the students.

Challenges and opportunities abound in a technology-driven fast changing world and in this context the best skill schools could impart a student is adaptability, he said. "Students must be trained to think quickly on their feet, be agile and innovate using cutting-edge technologies to solve 21st century problems," the Vice President emphasised while inaugurating the Vellore International School (VIS), established at Kayar, near Kelambakkam, near here, by the Vellore Institute of Technology (VIT). Complimen-



ting the management of VIT Group of Institutions for the important milestone in their educational journey, he said the VIT Group has been making consistent efforts to strengthen higher education in the private sector and "I am confident this institution will be another feather in their cap." Educational strategy should be

aligned to futuristic approach and shun rote learning. Also artificial segregation between curricular and extracurricular activities should be dispensed with and the students encouraged in multidiscipline, he suggested. "It is my fervent appeal to the schools across the nation to foster the spirit of curiosity, innovation and excellence in

students," Naidu said. The Vice President said he was informed that the VIS is trying to introduce the concept of house parent to integrate the positive aspects of Guru-Shishya tradition with modern pedagogical practices.

Urging teachers to pay attention to the use of mother tongue, he said wherever pos-

sible, at least until the primary level, the medium of instruction in public and private schools should be in mother tongue. "We must encourage students to speak freely in their mother tongue in their social environment on the school premises, at all the cultural events and in their homes. Only when we can freely and proudly speak our mother tongue can we truly appreciate our cultural heritage," he said.

Reiterating that focusing on our mother tongue is not to suggest one not to learn other languages like English, Naidu said he often said that one should learn as many languages as possible.

What is required is a strong foundation in the mother language. Proficiency in other languages, in addition to one's mother tongue, helps build cultural bridges and opens windows to new worlds of experience, the VP said.

Siddaramaiah to be CM face; rivals favour collective leadership

PNS ■ BENGALURU

In an attempt to project Siddaramaiah as the Congress's Chief Ministerial candidate in Karnataka for the 2023 Assembly polls, his loyalists are planning a month-long programme in August when he turns 75, even as State Congress chief D K Shivakumar's side asserted collective leadership and said anyone can become the Chief Minister. The voice of assertion from Shivakumar's camp this time came from his brother and Bengaluru Rural MP D K Suresh.

This is seen as another round in the game of one-upmanship between the two leaders, who have been nursing Chief Ministerial ambitions and also want to consolidate their clout within the party. The development comes even as Shivakumar and Siddaramaiah were in Delhi dis-



cussing the party's preparedness and campaign strategy for the polls with party's national leader Rahul Gandhi in New Delhi, along with general secretaries KC Venugopal and Randeep Singh Surjewala. According to sources, Siddaramaiah's supporters and wellwishers, including senior

Congress leaders and former Ministers like R V Deshpande and H C Mahadevappa, have planned a massive convention at the district headquarters town of Davangere on August 3, which is also being seen as a show of strength by the former Chief Minister's camp.

Murder most foul

The Udaipur incident is another reminder that timely action can prevent a situation from unravelling

The gruesome murder of Kanhaiya Lal, a tailor in Udaipur, is a reminder to all, especially the political class, that there is a lot that is rotten in the statecraft and politics of India. The killers, Gos Mohammad and Riyaz Akhtari, not only slaughtered Lal in his shop but also shot a video of their misdeed. They cut his throat with a cleaver and, according to the police, wanted to behead him but couldn't. In another video, the murderers not only gloated over the killing but also threatened to kill Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The case has been handed over to the National Investigation Agency (NIA). Meanwhile, in Udaipur, after a few violent incidents, curfew has been imposed; in entire Rajasthan, large gatherings have been disallowed for a month; mobile internet services have been shut down for 24 hours across the State. The authorities are alert now, but a little action and some alertness earlier by the local cops could have preempted the murder and the unfortunate situation that has arisen now. What led to the murder is still not quite clear. There are reports that Lal supported former BJP spokesperson Nupur Sharma, who was recently in the news for her controversial remarks about Prophet Muhammad. But it has also been reported that Lal did not know how to operate a mobile phone. When he was arrested following a complaint against him, he told the police that it was his child who, while



playing a game, had shared an objectionable post by mistake. Lal was arrested but was bailed out the next day, that is, June 11.

Whatever be the truth, it is undeniable that he had informed the police that he was receiving death threats, and yet no action was taken. ADG (Law and Order) Hawa Singh Ghumaria told a newspaper, "Then, on June 15, he submitted a written complaint that he is getting death threats and sought police protection. The SHO concerned called the persons who were allegedly issuing the threats. And then, five-seven responsible persons from both the communities sat down and reached an agreement. In a handwritten note, Kanhaiya Lal said he doesn't need any more action against anyone. Hence, the police did not proceed on the security threat." All this may be correct, but what was local intelligence doing? That Gos Mohammad and Riyaz Akhtari were quite radicalised is evident from not just their crime but also their belief that anyone offending their Prophet has to be executed. As they said in their video, "*Gustakh-e-Nabi ki ek hi saza*, sar tan se juda (There is only one punishment for disrespect to the Prophet, beheading)." This is a favourite slogan of Pakistan's Muslim fundamentalists. Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot has denounced Lal's murder, as also have other prominent leaders. Typically, they appeal to people to maintain peace. There is something that our political masters also need to do: Strengthen the law-enforcement apparatus and detox politics.

PICTALK



Men walk at the Nokian Tyres manufacturing plant in Vsevolozhsk, outside St Petersburg, Russia

A soldiers' soldier

Sam Bahadur, the architect of the 1971 victory against Pakistan, deserves the Bharat Ratna

He is the only military commander in modern times who can be described as the "soldiers' soldier". Sam Hormusji Framji Jamshedji Manekshaw, or Sam Manekshaw, led India in the 1971 war against Pakistan which resulted in the birth of Bangladesh. How he won the war despite odds like shortage of weapons and manpower has been recorded in golden letters in military history. He was the country's Chief of Army Staff from 1969 to 1973 and was promoted as India's first Field Marshal in January 1973. An Army commander who never hesitated to speak his mind to the highest political leadership, Sam Manekshaw is not a name to be remembered only on his birth or death anniversaries because he was much more than a military chief. Born as the son of a doctor in a middle class family, Sam could have opted for any profession of his choice but he ended up in the military academy. The story of Manekshaw as a soldier, officer and commander is folklore. Bravery, gallantry, intelligence and the willingness to go to the extra mile to realise his mission endeared him to his officers and subordinates.

The best example of his professional prowess was the decision of his British commander Major General David Cowan honouring a critically injured Manekshaw, then a captain fighting on the Burma front in 1942, with a Military Cross. The award was in recognition of his valour and fighting spirit against the Imperial Japanese Army. Since a dead man cannot be awarded the

Military Cross, the British commander decorated Manekshaw, who was fighting for his life after being felled by Japanese bullets. The appointment of Manekshaw as CoAs was a morale booster to the Indian Army which has not looked back since. India owes a lot to Sam for the win in the 1975 World Cup Hockey Championship at Kuala Lumpur. It was Sam who asked MAM Ramaswamy, an industrialist in Chennai, to pay for the air tickets of the Indian team with the day's Government looking the other way. Each person who has met him at least once has many things to reminiscence about this legendary soldier. This great son of India is a real Bharat Ratna and it would be ideal to honour him with the top civilian award during the 75th anniversary of India's freedom.

Unsettled queries in *l'affaire* Nupur

There's no merit in demands to lynch anybody without first appreciating the circumstances under which the person may have uttered angry words

In the emotional thrust and parrying of viewpoints over Nupur Sharma's remarks, some fundamental points have been lost sight of. Now that an authentic video of the TV programme is no longer available, we can only go by inferences and deductions and try to answer some fundamental questions based on these. What exactly did Nupur say that sparked this outrage both domestically and in Islamist nations? Indications are that she alluded to some details of the Islamic Prophet's life. Did she invent these details to malign Islam and mock its followers? If so, she deserves the strongest condemnation and a harsh punishment. If, however, what she mentioned was derived from Islamic sources, then her misdemeanour falls in the category of an unfortunate choice of words or a tactless iteration in the heat of debate. In that case, her immature simplicity was her only sin, quite understandable in somebody in her 30s. And that requires at best a reprimand from her party, the BJP, and an admonition to be more circumspect and to avoid such indiscretions.

The veracity of the above scenarios notwithstanding, was the overblown reaction to an off-the-cuff remark on national TV discussion, in response to provocation, proportionate and justifiable? Are the rabid chants of *sar-tan-se-juda* asking for her beheading, in Kanpur and elsewhere, condonable in civilised society? Should it be par for the course for any community to make children hold up posters asking for somebody's head? And all this when Nupur had already apologised unconditionally?

Something forgotten in the present overcharged discourse is what Nupur stated in a video flicker, since gone missing; that she cannot remain silent when her *Mahadev* is insulted and that she had made the remarks in anger. What did her Muslim interlocutor on the TV debate say about Lord Shiva that she was referring to? And why are his comments muted and lost in the din of her universal condemnation by the secular lobby in India and the Islamist one abroad?



In the pan-India protests after Friday prayers, the posters at different locations had an eerie commonality — of image, banner text. The similarity across distant locations points to coordinated planning and execution. Were the protests orchestrated by vested interests out to undermine the Modi Government by sowing discord between communities? Were these instigators, inimical to Indian national interest, inspired and funded by foreign agencies?

Now about the protests abroad. Does Qatar have any right to demand a public apology from the Government of India when in 2010 it had given shelter and honorary citizenship to artist MF Husain who, after painting Hindu goddesses in the nude, refused to appear before court and fled the country? Almost every Islamic nation, as well as the 57-member OIC, initially lambasted India for the intemperate remarks by somebody not holding any Government position. The Pakistan press lamented that "the idea of India was facing an existential crisis", presumably because the idea was secular, quite forgetting that the country itself is a theocratic State that unabashedly persecutes minorities.

An Arab newspaper point-



THE SIMILARITY IN PROTESTS ACROSS DISTANT GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATIONS POINTS TO COORDINATED PLANNING AND EXECUTION. WERE THE PROTESTS ORCHESTRATED BY VESTED INTERESTS OUT TO UNDERMINE THE MODI GOVERNMENT BY SOWING DISCORD BETWEEN COMMUNITIES?

ed out that Nupur's Muslim co-panelist was not blaspheming Ram or Sita when in anger she uttered the offending remarks. While that may well be true, she was instead provoked probably by the worst blasphemy possible for Hindus — the ritual washing of feet, *Vazoo*, by Muslim worshippers at Gyanvapi mosque That surely is an offence much greater than a tactless, angry remark.

Why was the reaction overblown? The Grand Mufti of Oman exhorted all Muslims to rise as one nation, there were calls in the Gulf countries for boycott of Indian goods, and there were reminders of India's dependence on the Gulf countries for oil imports and inward remittances.

Under Modi, India has tried its best to improve relations with the Gulf countries and obtained significant success. Modi himself has paid several visits to the region, been received warmly and had national honours bestowed on him. Pakistan often invokes the Islamic Ummah for undermining India; it did so this time also, especially with OIC. However, since its credibility is rather low, many Islamic countries did not take long to recover from the initial kneejerk reaction. The Iranian Foreign

Minister after his recent visit to New Delhi approved of the Indian Government's handling of the controversy and its fall-out. The Kuwait Government has taken strict action against the anti-India protesters, even deporting some expatriates and banning them from entering the country again.

Domestically, it was a god-send opportunity for the Opposition to malign Modi and BJP. Though religious figures like the Shahi Imam of Jama Masjid in Delhi distanced themselves from the unruly protests and violent rioting, leaders who cultivate the simple, unaware Islamic vote bank played to their gallery and feigned righteous indignation. The fact that major rioting started 10 days after the TV episode lends credence to the allegation that mob anger was built up over time deliberately by leaders like Owaisi. One of the downsides of democracy is that unscrupulous politicians may pander to the rabble's irrational sentiments for electoral gains at the cost of social cohesion; this episode illustrates it vividly.

(A former banker, the writer's love for words and ideas has turned him towards writing columns. The views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

PROBE SHOULD BE FAIR, UNBIASED

Sir — The reports suggest that the PMO has responded to a letter by the Contractors' Association of Karnataka, in which the body alleged that the Ministers and MLAs demand hefty commissions of about 40 per cent for giving approval to development projects in the State. Meanwhile, the contractors' association president has said the relevant documents pertaining to the case have been submitted to the officer sent by the Union Home Ministry. It's a positive development as the Centre has taken an initiative to dig out the truth in the serious charges of corruption.

However, the Centre's initiative to probe the menace of corruption among Ministers making headlines shouldn't become an eyewash and a ploy to give the clean chit to the BJP leaders — just to blunt the Opposition attack. The corruption deals between the Ministers and contractors executing Government projects are an open secret. The investigation shouldn't end up as an image makeover exercise ahead of the Assembly elections. Also, the Prime Minister's oft-repeated public statement "*Na khaunga, na khane doonga*" should hold good universally. Transparency and fairness should be the prime criteria to make the investigation convincing and justifiable.

N Sadhasiva Reddy | Bengaluru

31% RS MPS FACE CRIMINAL CASES

Sir — It's a big shock to the citizens that 31 per cent of the Rajya Sabha members across political parties have criminal cases against them, according to Association for Democratic reforms, National Election Watch. The Members of Legislative Assemblies elect the required number of MPs to the Rajya Sabha. The RS also includes men of integrity excelling in arts, literature, games and social service as they are nominated by the President on the Government's advice. Though ours is the biggest democracy, the way these leaders are elected is concerning for the democ-

Modi makes a point at G-7



In his address to the G-7 Summit recently, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's concern for global development and its betterment was noteworthy. Through his worthy words, the Prime Minister mentioned the utmost contribution made by India that was aimed at throwing a major light on the ultimate goal of global development. With special emphasis on the contributions made by the country, he further reiterated that we are the country that has been able to transform robustly with the help of concept of women-development to women-led develop-

racy as several ills need to be cured.

Thanks to former Chief Election Commissioner TN Seshan for bringing reforms in election procedures and implementing the existing rules strictly. It gave good results but not totally. Many things still have to be strictly implemented due to interference by politicians of ruling parties as they go by their convenience, resulting in the disappointment of citizens. But when the Elders are sent to the Rajya Sabha, everything should be transparent. When many RS members are involved in criminal cases, how can they feel comfortable with the title of Elders?

JP Reddy | Telangana

THE INTERNATIONAL ASTEROID DAY

Sir — June 30, the International Asteroid Day, will have everyone looking toward the skies. The day was founded after the 2014 release of the film *51 Degrees North*, which seeks to explore what would happen if an asteroid were to strike London. The film's creative team (many of whom are actual

scientists) wanted to raise more awareness about the threat of asteroids to earth, and how we can help protect ourselves. To make that happen, they formed a foundation, and in 2015, they celebrated the world's first International Asteroid Day. There are over one million asteroids in space that could potentially strike the earth, but modern scientists have discovered only about one per cent of them.

To combat this real and actual threat, the Asteroid Day's founders as well as a host of accomplished scientists, created the 100X Asteroid Declaration. The declaration aims for scientists to work towards increasing the rate of asteroid discovery to 100,000 per year within a decade. The International Asteroid Day focuses on spreading the word of the declaration and helping fellow earthlings prepare for a potential asteroid impact.

Faizan Khan | Ujjain

SOUND BITE

The deputy CM (Manish Sisodia) is unnecessarily politicising a desirable administrative action.



Delhi L-G —VK Saxena



French President —Emmanuel Macron

More layers, characters and mysteries will unfold when the audience will watch *Shamsher* on the big screen.



Director —Karan Malhotra



Indian spinner —R Ashwin

It is clear from the brutal daylight murder that miscreants feel confident under this State Government.



Former Rajasthan CM —Vasundhara Raje

FIRST COLUMN

LET’S BE THE CHANGE THAT WE WANT TO SEE

We have to develop a culture that springs from non-violence



RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJJI

In the past couple of years, there has been a growing concern across the world with regards to ruthless killings of whistleblowers, most of whom were courageous citizens who fought to secure the truth at the risk of their lives. These whistle blowers play an essential role in exposing corruption, fraud, mismanagement and other wrongdoing that threaten public health and safety, financial integrity, human rights, the environment and the rule of law.

By disclosing information about such misdeeds, these courageous people have helped save countless lives and billions in public funds, while preventing emerging scandals and disasters from worsening. Hence, such violent resistance to truth and its custodians in innumerable cases across the world shows extreme moral degradation of our society and the erosion of values. What kind of society would punish its whistleblowers and stifle the truth? Perhaps that’s the question we all need to ask ourselves. When muscle and money power call the shots everywhere, it is obvious that truth will always be on the run and evil on a perpetual chase.

The dictum of might is right has been strengthened by the depiction of violent episodes in history as well as through religious writings. There are many religious scriptures that show that even the Almighty showed His might by decimating the evil forces by means of a violent war to contain unrighteousness in the world. Hence, using force to set a wrong right or to discipline a wrong doer has been adopted as a norm by humans at all levels of existence.



To change this scene, patchwork solutions will no longer suffice. Because we need a complete transformation that can emerge when we change the powers we use. From the power of might, we now have to shift to the power of right and develop a culture that springs from non-violence.

Discarded as a theoretical tool and reduced to a mere embellishment in books, non-violence is actually a magic wand that can protect against the wrong and wrongdoer. One should not forget that we have already witnessed that the policy of an eye for an eye has made the whole world blind, so we need to now make use of the power of values to connect and correct.

The great potential of non-violence needs to be explored—a value which asks its users to refrain from aggression not just in action but also in words and even thoughts. The simplicity of non-violence lies in the fact that it can be used by anyone and at all levels—personal, social and global. Peace, spirituality and self-sustainability will be dominant in a culture nourished by non-violence. It will naturally ooze with security and brotherhood and any anti-social elements will soon be forced to the road of guilt and self-realisation.

Ideals that we struggle and fight for today—freedom, justice and equality—will be natural there. From a place where anything can happen to anyone at any time, the world will be transformed to a place where everything would happen at the right place, at the right time and in the right manner. There, the right would not just be right but right would be right.

Is it all as simple as it sounds? Yes, it is! Together, we all can, through spiritual empowerment, create such a way of life, but the fundamental rule for it is self-change. Most of us have wasted much of our precious time and energy in checking others and the quality of people at the social level, without realising that the creation of a fair society would begin from personal change that would work from the inside out. This change would be contagious which would spread through all of us, thus triggering a social transformation at global level. So, Let’s Be the Change.

(The author is a spiritual educator and popular columnist for publications across India, Nepal, and the UK)

Higher education has to become meaningful

Indians going to the US for education need to be informed about the world-class institutions India has



LN JHUNJHUNWALA

My mind goes back to 1945 and 1946. I was a postgraduate student in pure mathematics. We were just six students. Shree Satyen Bose was our Professor. He used to wear Dhoti Kurta (snow-white). Our classes were on the 3rd floor and there were no lifts.

Bose and Einstein were collaborating on some research which resulted in the discovery of the Bose-Einstein (Bosen) theory. Bose used to love me and was keen that after finishing studies, I go to study astronomy at Mount Wilson observatory in America. He was disappointed when I did not continue my studies.

I came from a very poor family. My mother died of tuberculosis without proper treatment for want of funds in 1936. My family had great expectations from me, that I would earn money as I was brilliant in education. But I became brilliant in business. I started learning business from my uncle in 1946 side by side with studies.

I came into business full-fledged in 1946 and retired in 2000. I have been very close to the Ramakrishna Mission since 1951. The mission had a splendid educational institute at Narendrapur in the suburb of Calcutta with about 3,000 students. Of the top 10 students in Calcutta University, at least two students were from Narendrapur. I was dreaming of having something like Narendrapur but on a tiny scale run by the Ramakrishna Mission monks.

Shree Arjun Singh was the human resource development minister. He belonged to Madhya Pradesh where I had established a technologically challenging graphite electrode plant. I had become very close to him. He would attend lectures of Swami Atmanandaji, whom we used to invite to Bhopal for lectures.

The mission had a number of educational institutions but no university. They decided to establish one at Belur Math in their large compound on the banks of the Ganges. They decided to send a delegation of monks to meet Arjun Singh. Knowing my closeness with him, they asked me to accompany them. His response was good; the next meeting was fixed after a month.

The Ramakrishna Mission had three subjects in mind for the University: (i) disaster management whose practical experience they had in floods and famines; (ii) rural development; and (iii) poverty alleviation. I was keen that they included mathematics so that their performance could be compared internationally.

I met Arjun Singh alone and requested him, while interacting with them, to emphasise on mathematics. He was enthusiastic. The ministry did their homework. An additional secretary and other officers attended the meeting. Five senior monks of the mission and I attended the meeting. On Singh’s emphasis, mathematics was agreed upon.

He was highly impressed that the proposed vice-chancellor was a scholar of



SATYEN BOSE AND EINSTEIN WERE COLLABORATING ON SOME RESEARCH WHICH RESULTED IN THE DISCOVERY OF THE BOSE-EINSTEIN (BOSEN) THEORY. BOSE USED TO LOVE ME. HE WAS DISAPPOINTED WHEN I DID NOT CONTINUE MY STUDIES

The author is Emeritus Chairman, LNJ Bhilwara



physics and was teaching it to graduates of the mission college and another monk, Mahan Maharaj, was a great scholar of mathematics and famous internationally.

The mission pointed out that the mathematics education would be expensive. Faculty will have to be paid liberally. As there are Nobel Laureates in other subjects, mathematics also has able laureates. The mission wanted a grant of Rs 40 crore and Singh agreed to that.

The mission started looking for a mathematics scholar to start this course. Fortunately, there was a Bengali mathematician, Abhijeet Dutt, at the Kyoto University who was engaged in research with Japanese students. He was keen to come to Bengal. With his coming back, the RK Mission University became a hub of mathematics in India. The board of governors included four monks of the mission and four officials of the Ministry. Singh nominated me on the board. He told the mission that I had vast experience in dealing with the bureaucracy and that I would be helpful. Thus I became a board member.

Unfortunately, Arjun Singh passed away in 2011. Dealing with the ministry became difficult.

The senior Sanyasinis of Sarada Math once came to visit the university. Abhijeet Dutt welcomed them in his half pants and a sports T-shirt. The Sanyasinis were not very comfortable. Nobody told anything to the professor but he started feeling uncomfortable. He resigned and went back to Kyoto. This was unfortunate. I wish the mission had handled the professor better.

After the demise of Arjun Singh, I found my name had disap-

peared from the board without my knowledge. I was not happy.

In 2020, I came across an IIT dean. I informed him that I have four thousand students studying for higher secondary at four places where we have schools. I requested his assistance. He visited one of our institutes and was highly impressed with our research activities. We were looking forward to some kind of association with IIT. But nothing came up.

Recently, my daughter became very enthusiastic for our schools. Therefore, I fixed a meeting with the Dean of an IIT. The Dean was warm and he briefed me about their activities in mathematics research done by postgraduate mathematicians.

Similarly, I am now associated with the Harish-Chandra Maths research institute at Allahabad. With my daughter’s involvement and my good health and alert mind, I am hopeful that I will be alive to see India produce an able laureate in mathematics.

I requested the Vice-Chancellor, Swami Atmapriyanadaji, to include artificial intelligence and I donated Rs 15 lakh for that. He was also thinking about artificial intelligence. One of his students is teaching artificial intelligence at the South African University; he has agreed to join soon. I hope something emerges.

I look across at my friends and my own family. My grandson went to the United States to study mathematics. After two years, he wanted to specialise in some branch of mathematics whose expertise was available at Cambridge; he moved to Cambridge. I was hopeful that

he would make his mark internationally but he lost interest in mathematics.

It is difficult for me to evaluate whether his education abroad for five years did him some good. He took up music and joined Fayaaz Dagar, where I also joined him to renew my interest in vocal music. He lost interest in vocal music too and joined sarod, and moved to Bombay because his teacher was in Poona.

One of my grandsons from my daughter’s side did his graduation abroad and entered the business. It is difficult to conclude whether his foreign education was helpful.

Similarly, my granddaughter from my daughter’s side did architecture in the US with great enthusiasm. On her return, she joined an architecture firm where she did well. But she is no longer in the field of architecture.

The younger generation of rich people is not accustomed to hard work for a livelihood.

They are guided by their temporary whims.

The US earns billions of dollars from students coming from China and India. India spends a large amount in foreign exchange on Indians studying abroad. Affluent families send them abroad even after higher secondary education. After graduation, the US is well equipped for studies in artificial intelligence, space travel, mathematics, etc. But what do we get?

The Institute of Science in Bangalore and the Atomic Research Institute are world-class. IITs are growing well. Indians going to the US for education need to be informed about the international status of some such institutions.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

AS HEAD OF THE FAMILY, I TELL YOU THE TIME HAS NOT PASSED YET. I APPEAL TO YOU... WE’LL RESOLVE ALL DIFFERENCES. —SHIV SENA CHIEF AND MAHARASHTRA CM UDDHAV THACKERAY



ALL THE MLAS HERE (GUWAHATI) ARE HAPPY AND UNITED. THERE’S NOTHING TO WORRY. WE’LL ALL GO TO MUMBAI SOON. —REBEL SENA LEADER EKNATH SHINDE

Murmu: NDA’s choice for inclusive democracy

Draupadi Murmu struggled to raise her children, while also becoming a foremost social and political worker

Democracy serves people best when it’s inclusive. The Bharatiya Janata Party-led National Democratic Alliance, by picking up former Jharkhand governor Draupadi Murmu as its candidate for the July 18 Presidential election, has abided by the inclusive Dharma of democracy.

The two successful candidates of the NDA in the past who made to Rashtrapati Bhavan equally emphasised inclusivity and most suitable to hold the top Constitutional post. APJ Abdul Kalam, India’s missile man, not only lived to give the country strategic deterrence but also became a role model for all, particularly youth. His life was a living testimony to the Indian tradition of pursuit of knowledge and humility.



SUMEET BHASIN

The author is Director, Public Policy Research Centre (@Sumetbhasin)

In Ram Nath Kovind, India got a President who was most humble and democratic, who opened the doors of Rashtrapati Bhavan for the people while being most courteous in his conduct and discharge of the duty. The political commentators sought to bracket him as the BJP’s Dalit bet, but he eventually proved that he could conduct the Constitutional duties most efficiently.

Murmu struggled all her life but beat the odds to raise her children, while also becoming a foremost social and political worker. From being a legislator, she proved her mettle in Odisha as a minister and thereafter as the governor of Jharkhand.

She would be the first tribal President of India since the

NDA has the support of the Biju Janata Dal and the YSR Congress for the July 18 election. The BJP has for long been pursuing an inclusive agenda. Even in 1996, when the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government fell in 13 days despite being the single largest party, it had the largest number of the tribal MPs in its ranks. The BJP’s foremost commitment to take all sections of society has been an abiding principle.

Murmu will be a candidate in the Presidential election at a time when the Narendra Modi-led government has given a new hope to the tribal population in the country by taking his mantra of ‘Sabka Sath, Sabka Viswas aur Sabka Prayas’ to every nook and corner of the country, including the tribal areas in Jharkhand, Odisha

and Chhattisgarh. During the rule of the United Progressive Alliance, Leftwing or Maoist extremism was at its peak; people talked about the Red Corridor, connecting the hotbed of Maoist violence in Nepal to the deep forests in Sukma in Chhattisgarh. The violence cost several lives of paramilitary forces.

The NDA government set out for course correction right at the outset, and gave hope to the tribal youth that they can see better future in the mainstream of society, as several welfare schemes brought benefits to the people without hassles, without paying bribes. The government’s honesty was visible, and the tribals of the country turned their backs to violence.

In the last few years,

Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Telangana and Odisha have largely been peaceful, with a decline in Maoist violence.

When Murmu takes the oath of the office as the President of India, the tribal population will see the fulfillment of their political aspirations. They will see that one from among them is the first citizen of India.

The Aspirational District programme of the Central government was envisioned with clear objective that the gains of the development must reach the poorest of the poor, in accordance with the true of Deen Dayal Upadhyaya.

The tribals have seen that they have been brought in the mainstream of the economy with financial inclusion, pucca houses with toilets, pension

schemes and so on. They don’t need to fall for the allurements of the evangelists to embrace their religion.

The elevation of Murmu to the post of the President of India will be the firm democratic empowerment of the tribal population, as well as women of the country. She has thoroughly been a spiritual person and her association with Brahmakumaris is well known.

She was sweeping the floor of a temple a day after her name was announced by the BJP president JP Nadda; people have seen how humble a person she is. She stands for simplicity, spirituality.

She is a Constitutionalist, a firm believer in the Indian Constitution’s capacity to fulfill the aspirations of all sections of society. Her life is also a living

testimony of perseverance. She never lost hope even when she faced personal losses. In her, India will have a President who will give hope to the vast majority of the people that all hardships can be won over with honesty and patience.

While the Opposition parties were busy in elimination rounds to find a candidate for the Presidential election, the BJP was thinking of national interest. When the BJP named Murmu as its Presidential candidate, even the rivals suggested that the contest has become one-sided. The Opposition candidate, Yashwant Sinha, can save his lost reputation by gracefully withdrawing from the Presidential election to pave way for the unanimous election of Murmu as India’s President.

MONEY MATTERS

Pharma company Innova Captab files IPO papers with Sebi

Pharmaceutical company Innova Captab Ltd has filed preliminary papers with capital markets regulator Sebi to raise funds through an initial public offering (IPO).The proposed IPO comprises fresh issuance of equity shares worth Rs 400 crore and an offer for sale (OFS) of 96 lakh equity shares by promoters and other shareholders, according to the draft red herring prospectus (DRHP). As part of the OFS, Manoj Kumar ohariwala, Vinay Kumar Lohariwala and Gian Parkash Aggarwal will sell 32 lakh shares each.At present, promoters -- Manoj and Vinay -- hold 39.66 per cent and 30.08 per cent stake, respectively, in the company, while Gian owns a 30.23 per cent holding in the pharma firm.Besides, the company may consider pre-IPO placement of equity shares aggregating up to Rs 80 crore. If such a placement is undertaken, the size of the fresh issue will be reduced.



Tata Steel to spend Rs 1,200cr on new technology development

Tata Steel Ltd is betting big on new technology development over the next three to four years and has firmed up plans to pump in around Rs 1,200 crore as a part of its endeavour to enter materials beyond steel, a top company official said. In the new materials business, the steel giant has been focusing on graphene, which can be mixed with plastic and recycled like brand-new products, among other attributes, he said. Tata Steel is a leading global producer of graphene-enriched products - the biggest in the country and among the top 10 in the world. "As far as the new materials business is concerned, the outlay in entire technology development, including incubation, over the next three to four years is about Rs 1,200 crore," Vice-President, Technology & New Materials Business, Debashish Bhattacharjee, told PTI. As compared to "asset heavy" steel - the core of Tata Steel, these new materials are asset light, he said.



Steel prices likely to go up again from July 1 on high input cost: JSPL MD

After back-to-back downward corrections, steel prices are expected to rise from July due to high input costs, an industry executive said on Wednesday."While coal price is at Rs 17,000 a tonne, iron ore prices by Odisha Mineral Corporation are still high. It is the main supplier of iron ore in Odisha," JSPL Managing Director V R Sharma told PTI on the sidelines of an event organised by the Indian Chamber of Commerce here. "The prices have already bottomed out. There is no chance of reducing them further. There will be an upward price correction from Friday, July 1 by (primary players) mainly on account of higher input costs," he said.Secondary steel makers have already increased the price of rebars by Rs 2,000 to Rs 55,000 per tonne in the last four days, Sharma said.There are various other factors building pressure on steel makers, Sharma said, adding there are issues with the availability of coal.



Proper interpretation of data key to informed decision-making

PNS ■ MUMBAI

RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das on Wednesday emphasised the need for proper interpretation of data to facilitate more informed decision making as it will bring clarity in communication from decision makers as well as formation of rational expectations from market participants.

"The importance of statistics in public policy is well understood. In the face of high uncertainty brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, the discipline of statistics found itself in greater spotlight. This unprecedented global phenomenon has tested human endeavour in multiple facets and magnitude," he said.

Speaking at the RBI's annual 'Statistics Day Conference', Das mentioned that lockdowns in various countries, including India, posed severe challenges to the compilation and availability of data relating to the spread of the pandemic, and its impact on various economies and the world urgently needed solutions to a problem it had never seen before.

Recalling India's experience



in data gathering, he said the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation was compelled to publish imputed figures for Consumer Price Index (CPI) for two consecutive months during the first wave of the pandemic in 2020 due to immense difficulty in collection of prices for many items.

He said statistical innovations arising out of the pandemic disruption will have long-lasting benefits and added that the upheaval also posed

challenges to statistical agencies to build more public trust in the resulting statistics.

While new data sources open up opportunities for official statistics, he said it also raises issues for the discipline. "... statistics should focus on laying down the pathway towards proper interpretation in the present world of data abundance. This would facilitate more informed decision making, clarity in communication from decision makers and formation of rational expecta-

tions from market participants," Das said.

Observing that the development of proper data quality framework and ensuring data privacy and data security has assumed top priority, Das said this was a central theme for the recently held International Association for Official Statistics Conference in April 2022.Central banks on their part are both producers and users of statistics for policy actions as well as for assessing the outcomes of their actions. They also need to establish stronger communication of their policies and actions in such turbulent times, he noted.

Thus, central banks too had to cope with all these challenges by focussing on alternative indicators and data sources for monitoring the effects of the pandemic in all its dimensions.Talking about RBI, Das said it has refocused its statistical endeavours during the pandemic to ensure the continuity of its mission.

"RBI's past efforts in streamlining of data flow, investment in technology and continuous engagement with regulated entities paid dividends.

Stocks halt 4-day winning run, Sensex down 150 pts on weak global markets

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Snapping its four-day winning run, benchmark Sensex declined by over 150 points on Wednesday due to profit booking in IT, FMCG and banking shares following weak global trends and persistent foreign capital outflows.

In a volatile session, the 30-share BSE Sensex settled 150.48 points or 0.28 per cent lower at 53,026.97 as 20 of its stocks ended with losses. During the day, it tumbled 564.77 points or 1.06 per cent to a low of 52,612.68 ahead of the expiry in the derivatives segment on Thursday.

The broader NSE Nifty declined by 51.10 points or 0.32 per cent to 15,799.10 with 34 of its constituents closing in the red.In the four-day rally to Tuesday, Sensex spurred by 2.59 per cent or 1,354 points while Nifty had gained 2.84 per cent or 436 points.Among Sensex shares, Hindustan Unilever fell the most by 3.46 per cent. IndusInd Bank, Axis Bank, Bajaj Finserv, Wipro, HCL Technologies, Titan, Kotak Mahindra Bank and Bajaj Finance were the other major losers.

Cabinet gives *post facto* approval to pact with IRENA

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday gave post facto approval to the strategic partnership agreement with the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) which will help India in green energy transition.

"The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi was apprised of a Strategic Partnership Agreement signed between the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE), Government of India, and the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA)," an official statement said.

According to the statement, the Agreement was signed in January 2022. The aim of the Agreement is to drive ambition, leadership and knowledge on green energy transitions based on renewable energy in India.It also stated that the Union Cabinet has approved the strategic partnership agreement.The Agreement will help India's energy transition efforts and will also help the world in combating climate change.

The areas of cooperation as envisaged in the Strategic



"The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi was apprised of a Strategic Partnership Agreement signed between the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE), Government of India, and the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA)," an official statement said.

Partnership Agreement will support India in achieving its ambitious target of 500 GW of installed non-fossil fuel electricity capacity by 2030. This in-turn will promote Atmanirbhar Bharat.

The salient features of the agreement include enhanced cooperation in the areas such as facilitating knowledge sharing from India on scaling-up

renewable energy and clean energy technologies.

It will also support India's efforts on long term energy planning and collaborate to strengthen the innovation climate in India.The pact will also focus on moving towards cost-effective decarbonisation through catalysing development and deployment of green hydrogen.

Marine exports up 30 pc to nearly US\$ 8 bn in FY22

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Exports of marine products rose 30.26 per cent to USD 7.76 billion during 2021-22 as against USD 5.96 billion in previous fiscal year, the commerce ministry said on Wednesday.

India shipped 13,69,264 MT (metric tonne) of seafood worth Rs 57,586.48 crore during 2021-22. "During 2021-22, the export improved in rupee term by 31.71 per cent, in USD terms by 30.26 per cent and in quantity terms by 19.12 per cent," the ministry said in a statement.

K N Raghavan, Chairman, Marine Products Export Development Authority



(MPEDA), said India managed to do "all-time high" exports of USD 7.76 billion.

Frozen shrimp remained the major export item in terms of quantity and value. Its shipments stood at USD 5.82 billion last fiscal year. The seg-

ment accounts for 75.11 per cent of the total dollar earnings.

The US is the largest market of frozen shrimp, followed by China, the European Union, South East Asia, Japan, and the Middle East.

NIIF invests US\$ 300 mn in DP World's container terminal arm

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Indian government-promoted National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF) on Wednesday said it has invested USD 300 million or Rs 2,250 crore for a 22.5 per cent stake in Hindustan Ports, a local arm of UAE's DP World.This is the single largest investment by NIIF's master fund and takes the vehicle's total investment in DP World's India arms to USD 500 million, as per an official statement.Hindustan Ports operates five container terminals, managing more than 5 million TEU or standard 20-ft container unit capacity, and accounts for a market share of over 20 per cent. It operates two terminals in Mumbai, and one each at Mundra, Chennai and Cochin, NIIF said in a statement.

Jet Airways in talks with aircraft makers, lessors to lease 6-8 planes by Dec

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Jet Airways is in discussions with aircraft manufacturers and lessors to lease 6-8 planes, including some of those which were to be delivered to Russian carriers prior to the Ukraine war, as it gets ready for the relaunch, according to sources.

Moreover, the airline is also negotiating with airport operators to secure slots with "good" timings, they said.

Once a major player in the Indian aviation space, the carrier has not flown since April 17, 2019 and is being revived under the ownership of the Jalan-Kalrock consortium.

Last month it got its air operator certificate revalidated by the aviation safety regulator DGCA.

"Aircraft availability is



always an issue but now due to the Russia-Ukraine war, aircraft which were to be delivered to Russia are also available in the market along with those leased planes which were flying in Russia," a source told PTI.He said the airline is negotiating with Both Boeing, Airbus and the lessors, adding that "discussions are at a very

high level and an announcement is expected to be made very soon."According to the source, JetAirways is looking to lease 6-8 aircraft by December.

Jet Airways confirmed that the airline is in "advanced discussion" with the lessors and original equipment manufacturer (OEMs) but did not share specific details.

Rupee falls 18 paise to close at all-time low of 79.03 against US dollar

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The rupee depreciated 18 paise to close at a record low of 79.03 (provisional) against the US dollar on Wednesday, weighed down by persistent foreign capital outflows, a strong dollar overseas and surge in crude oil prices.At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened lower at 78.86 against the greenback and finally settled at 79.03, down 18 paise over its previous close.

During the session, the rupee touched an all-time low of 79.05 against the American currency.On Tuesday, the rupee plunged by 48 paise to close at the record low of 78.85 against the US dollar.The domestic unit has lost 1.97 per cent so far this month and has eroded a staggering 6.39 per cent since the start of this year.

Eveready in midst of transformation: MD

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Batteries and flashlights maker Eveready Industries India Ltd on Wednesday said it is in the midst of a transformation that lays the road map for a growth journey.

Chairing the company's AGM virtually, Managing Director Suvomoy Saha said that Eveready is now actively working towards improvement in portfolio augmentation, reaching out to consumers and process upgradation.

Saha said that the fundamental strengths of the businesses remain intact with a solid brand, strong distribution reach and significantly high market share in the core categories of batteries and flashlights.

The management of the company is now purely focused on harnessing these strengths for delivery of results. Some of the initiatives may need some time to fructify, but directionally these are for long-term and sustainable value creation, he told shareholders.

Eveready has exited from the appliance business in the



second half of the last fiscal to focus on core activity.

... the company's growth in the recent past has been negligible. This is an identified area for improvement. Towards this, the company is working to chart out a strategy for growth and also improve existing operational areas, the MD said.

Speaking about the economy and market, he said that a slowdown in demand for FMCG products was seen in large parts of the market, particularly rural ones due to high inflation resulting from geopolitical headwinds.

Turnover for the year was down by 3.4 per cent primarily due to a slow-down in the Q4 in the core categories of batteries and flashlights, and also due to the gradual exit from the appliance business in the 2nd half, Saha said.

Indian direct selling industry reports US\$ 3.25 billion sales

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian direct selling industry has reported retail sales of USD 3.25 billion in 2021 (around Rs 27,650 crore) and maintained its 12th place in the global rankings, said a report released by Washington-based World Federation of Direct Selling Associations (WFDSA).

The Indian direct selling industry reported a growth of 7.7 per cent in 2021 and had a CAGR (Compound Annual

Growth Rate) of 15.7 per cent in the last three years from 2018 to 2021, grabbing sixth position in the Asia Pacific region, the report added.

The Indian direct selling industry is led by companies, including Amway, Avon, Oriflame, Modicare, Herbalife etc.US has emerged as the top direct selling market accounting for 23 per cent of the total sales with USD 42.67 billion retail sales, said WFDSA report.

During the period, wellness category reported the highest sales and contributed around

35 per cent of the global sales, followed by the cosmetics & personal care segment with 25 per cent.Top 10 countries, including the US, Germany, South Korea, China, Japan, Malaysia, Brazil, Mexico, France and Taiwan, contributed 78 per cent of the global sales."Excluding China sales, the industry continued growth with a three-year compound annual growth rate of 3.8 per cent for the 2018-2021 period," the report said.

It was followed by South Korea and Germany, both contributing equally 10 per cent of the total global sales with around USD 19 billion sales from direct retail.

In 2021, the global direct selling industry reported sales of USD 186.10 billion, up 1.5 per cent in constant currency terms, the WFDSA report added.

During the period, wellness category reported the highest sales and contributed around

Centre working on model bylaws to allow diversification of PACS

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre is working on model bylaws to enable primary agriculture credit societies (PACS) diversify from their core business and allow them to undertake several activities and services to become viable, a top Cooperation Ministry official said on Wednesday.

The computerisation of all functional 63,000 PACS, which will commence this fiscal with the Cabinet approving a budget of Rs 2,516 crore, will bring transparency in accounting and book keeping, thereby facilitating them to diversify to other

activities smoothly, he said.

"The existing bylaws does not allow PACS to diversify from their core business. The Union Cooperation Ministry is in the process of drafting a model bylaws to enable them to offer several services and activities," the official said.

PACS will be allowed to offer 20-odd services. They will be allowed to work as Bank Mitras and common service centres (CSCs), provide cold storage and godown facilities, set up PDS shops besides enabling them to work in dairy, fishery, irrigation and biogas sectors among others, he said.



"The draft 'model PACS bylaws' will be ready in a month

and will seek comments from the state governments. The

model bylaws will be advisory in nature," he added.At present,

majority of PACS have not computerised their operation and still functioning manually resulting in inefficiency and trust deficit.

PACS constitute the lowest tier of the three-tier short-term cooperative credit in the country comprising 13 crore farmers as its members. At present, there are 63,000 PACS in the country and the Centre has a target to set up 3 lakh PACS by 2025.Besides a model bylaws for PACs, the government is working on a new cooperation policy, setting up of an university and develop a data base of cooperatives.

Film producer Siddharth Roy Kapur on Wednesday announced a slate of eight new web shows where he is collaborating with acclaimed directors such as Vishnuvardhan, Mahesh Narayanan and Arati Kadav.

In a media statement, the producer's company Roy Kapur Films said the shows will range from historical epics to powerful family dramas.

Shershaah director Vishnuvardhan is set to make his series directorial debut with an epic action drama across multiple seasons. The show will tell the fascinating story of an integral part of India's 20th century military history, as per the statement.

Narayanan, best known for helming Malayalam film *C U Soon*, and *Malik*, will direct an edge-of-the-seat multi-season spy thriller, set across the Middle East and South Asia.

National award-winning director Hardik Mehta of *Kaamyaaab* fame, will direct a thrilling family drama series set across Europe, Africa and India in the rarefied and exclusive world of warring business families.

Noted writer-director Abbas Tyrewala, known for his directorial debut *Jaane Tu Ya Jaane Na*, will write and showrun a suave and stylish spy action drama series, set in the cloak and dagger world of South Asian counter-intelligence.

The series *Matka King*, which was announced last year, will be created by Nagraj Manjule. The show is based on the fascinating world of the gambling game matka and the dangerous and brilliant men who ran it.

Kadav, who has helmed *Cargo*, is creating a series which will be a fresh and quirky take on romance in the sci-if genre.

The production house said their endeavour has been to empower new voices by giving them a platform to showcase their work, and this continues with the launch of two directorial debutants.

Bhavesh Kapadia, a popular ad filmmaker, will make his directorial debut with a wild and entertaining female-led comic thriller series.

Anubhav Chopra, who earned rave reviews for his Netflix documentary *House of Secrets: The Burari Deaths*, will write and direct a young adult drama series, set in the pressure cooker environment of a modern day high-school.

Jinesh Shah, Head, Originals RKF said they are excited to bring riveting stories to audiences.

"With these eight phenomenal series, we are prepared to bring audiences a smorgasbord of riveting stories. We're looking forward to training our lenses on different worlds with these talented filmmakers, and delving into the psyches of intriguing, layered and compelling characters," Shah said.

On the film front, Roy Kapur Films will release feature films including heroic tank battle *Pippa* featuring Ishan Khatter, Taapsee Pannu and Pratik Gandhi's *Woh Ladki Hai Kahaan* and *Bas Karo Aunty!*, starring Ishwak Singh and Mahima Makwana, besides the much-awaited season 2 of *Rocket Boys*.

Siddharth Roy Kapur announces 8 new web shows



Sona Mohapatra, Sushant Divgikar celebrate pride month

As Pride Month comes to an end, singer, producer, and composer Sona Mohapatra and her close friend and multi-faceted talent Sushant Divgikar, engaged in an interesting conversation to conclude that, 'change is coming whether one likes it or not'.

The two powerful representatives of intersectionality at various levels had a heart-to-heart chat recently on Sona's InstaLive about the need for inclusivity, allyship, diversity, and open dialogue.

Sona has always been a strong ally of the community and discussed with Sushant, everything from how Indian media represents the LGBTQ+ community to how inclusivity must go beyond tokenism.

Interestingly the two come from very different backgrounds but have the same open-hearted and broadminded worldview. In the conversation, Sona mentioned her conservative upbringing and how she never let that come in the way of accepting unconventional choices and instead was driven to learn more about the LGBTQ+ community during her artistic journey.

She said, "The artistic space is much more open-minded to gender. In the entertainment industry, there is a sense of openness and broad-mindedness. It's incredible that we finally have the freedom to celebrate Pride Month but we need to tell India, 'Don't Shut Up!' As a young country, we need to be more curious, push the envelope further and break more boundaries. I'm counting on the youth of India to make this shift."

Sushant recalled how LGBTQIA+ refer-

ences can be traced back to our art, culture, and history. He welcomed the change that is unfolding at the policy level and also movies like *Chandigarh Kare Aashiqui* which are opening up the space for brave, new conversations. He added, "I met the director and the producer of the film as well and suggested that if a 'Mumbai Kare Aashiqui' sequel is made, I would love to be a part of it."

The two however also acknowledged that complete social acceptance continues to be elusive as people remember the transgender community only during weddings or births and disregard them the rest of the time.

Sona said, "As far as representation at music festivals and artistic events is concerned, no one from the LGBTQ community is showcased at something like an NH7 event, for instance. All the woke people who organise music festivals need to start becoming more inclusive." Sushant

agreed, "You will be truly inclusive when representation goes beyond tokenism. People who talk about inclusivity need to walk the talk, take action on the claims and promises being made."

Sushant and Sona despite achieving massive success and even their own dream billboard moment in New York's Time Square have faced severe online trolling and discussed how they deal with it.

Sona said, "The few of you who hate, we don't need you. India doesn't need you. Insults don't faze me and we'll not shut up anytime soon. Things are changing and will change, those who don't like it or are uncomfortable should log off." Sushant concurred and said, "Only the ignorant are full of fear and hate. They're scared because they don't know us. The more you know, the lesser your fears will be. So I don't blame them for it. It's their journey. I also don't let them make me feel bad. There is not enough time to focus on hate and I appreciate the positive and neglect the negative."

This resilience to go on despite being pushed back by prejudice and hate is what sums up the essence of *Shut Up Sona*, a documentary being showcased on ZEE5 from July 1 onwards. Directed by Deepti Gupta, the National Award-winning documentary is an intimate account of how Sona is challenged as an artist and a woman at every step and told to not take too much space and to shut up. This is a story of a woman who however refuses to conform or to stop fighting for an equal space not just just for herself but for everyone who feels excluded and discriminated against.



Richa Chadha learning Kathak for Sanjay Leela Bhansali's *Heeramandi*?

Bollywood actress Richa Chadha is gearing up for her next film for which she is taking diction and dance lessons in Kathak. The actress has already been trained in the dance form till a particular stage and she wants to take it forward from there itself.

Richa has been spotted outside Sanjay Leela Bhansali's office quite a few times in the recent past and as the director is gearing up for his digital debut, *Heeramandi* these days, it could be possible that Richa is taking the dance classes for her role in *Heeramandi*.

A source close to the film's production says, "*Heeramandi* is one of the most ambitious projects till date for Sanjay sir. It being his digital debut which makes it even more special and challenging at the same time as one has to put their best foot forward. Richa has already been doing the look tests for the show and she is all set to play a crucial role. As part of it, she's learning kathak now and the classes have already begun ahead of the series shoot next month in Mumbai. Richa has been training for the last 2 weeks already and will continue training for another few days."



Woody Allen Plans To Direct 'One Or Two More' Films

American auteur Woody Allen has plans of directing 'one or two more' films. However, for him the thrill is gone for making movies because of the decline of the theatrical experience, reports 'Deadline'.




Allen expressed his wish during a conversation with Alec Baldwin, the actor who is currently facing legal proceedings for the fatal shooting of the Ukrainian cinematographer Halyna Hutchins during the filming of the Western *Rust* in October last year. The conversation between Allen and Baldwin was livestreamed on Instagram.

'Deadline' further states that while Allen plans to direct the movie, he hasn't revealed details about the project, the 86-year-old filmmaker said he will direct a film that will shoot in Paris in the late-summer or early fall. His most recent film was *Rifkin's Festival*, which grossed just \$2.3 million, reaching the U.S. in a limited release earlier this year but making little impact in the marketplace. The filmmaker has seen his career options narrow in recent years amid revived scrutiny around past allegations of sexual abuse. Book publisher Hachette also cancelled the publication of his memoir in 2020.




Even before Covid, Allen said, the challenging environment for traditional theatrical releases was starting to weigh on him. "When I started, you'd do a film and it would go into a movie house and movie houses all over the country, and people would come by the hundreds to watch it in big groups on a big screen," he said.

"Now, you do a movie and you get a couple of weeks in a movie house, maybe six weeks, four weeks, whatever. And then it goes right to streaming or right to pay-per-view, and people love sitting home with their big screens and watching it on their television sets." As a result, he continued, "It's not as enjoyable to me."




ARCHIE



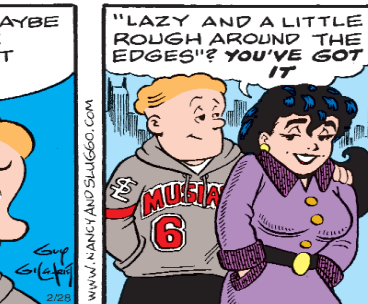
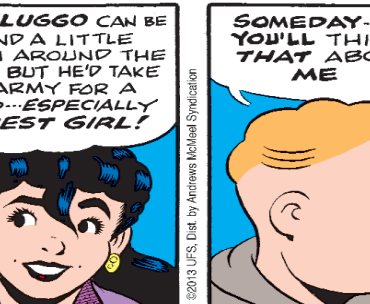
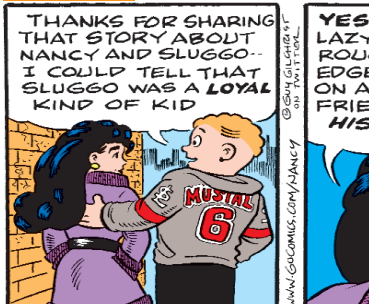
CALVIN AND HOBBS






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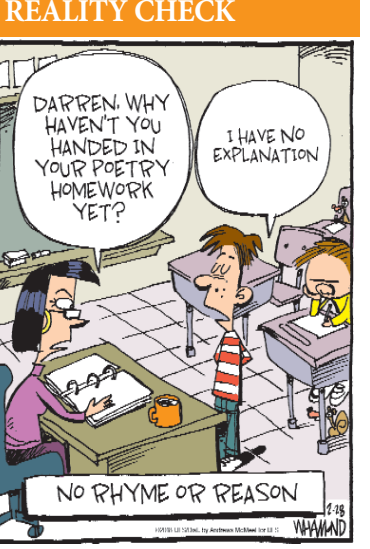
NANCY




GINGER MEGGS



REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD

1	2	3	4	5	
6				7	8
9			10		
12	13			14	15
17				18	
19					

ACROSS

1 All people
6 Fixes
7 On the way out
9 Too
10 An underground room
12 Class
14 A long seat for several people
17 Tiny
18 Unlocks
19 Replying

DOWN

2 A planet
3 A prickly flower bush
4 Pleaded

SOLUTION

P	H	O	I	T	P
R	O	A	S	T	
E	A	R	T	A	
F	O	R	G	O	T
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For this week's edition of Community Wise, *The Pioneer* brings to you an initiative called KIIMS Cuddles by Dr. Shilpi Reddy.

HANDLING PREGNANCY WITH JOY

SHIKHA DUGGAL

A newborn baby and their parents are the purest forms of attachment that you'll see around and Dr. Shilpi Reddy, the founder of a beautiful initiative called KIIMS Cuddles, is propagating how parents can instinctively care and nurture for the child along with their own wellness, which is so very important in today's life.

Motherhood, and in fact, fatherhood, changes you inside and out. As parents adjust to a new life with a baby, it's important to remember that their minds and emotions are also changing, so the gynaecologist should be sure to give them the support they need to move away from a routine check-up. She's instead on a bigger mission.

She narrated to us how pregnant women had a gala time in the infotainment carnival once, where mothers-to-be walked the ramp and celebrated the joy of pregnancy during the event.

And, not to forget, this is her personal agenda. "I'm doing all of this for 360-degree holistic care, it doesn't end with giving my patients medicine. The nine months should be a memorable time and not only nauseous for the woman and stressful for the man to watch her spouse undergo these blatant changes. Most

importantly, I only encourage normal delivery. All these changes can only be made when we create the right awareness amongst the crowd about child-care. It's a dire need to incorporate health and wellness programmes into every hospital now. For example, organic food or organic farming is the way to go. At the same time, spiritual holistic like water yoga is as important as the above pointers. Because emotions go on a rollercoaster ride during these days," she informs us.

But, why is she stressing so much about normal delivery and not a caesarean? Well, she responds, "Because women are going for the latter method only out of fear. It's against mother nature. All of a sudden, the Telangana state government has realised that the caesarean rates are increasing in the city, even in government hospitals. Sigh. Now, they want the doctors to convince mothers to go for normal deliveries when the whole system has

turned upside-down. What can we do? Women go onto Google search bars which indicate to them that labour means pain and pregnancy means stress. I have had a team for the past five years, who are equally passionate about KIIMS Cuddles. Let me clarify, the hospital doesn't sponsor us. They are only for branding pur-

poses." New moms struggle with anxiety over a number of things, from fear of something happening to the baby to not making enough breastmilk. Disrupted sleep and being overtired can amplify these feelings. And she's doing it all while praising the positive changes in her life.

She recalls, "The idea of being pregnant came to me when I was 34 years old because I was so engrossed in work. From the time I delivered preterm twins, we adopted a sustainable lifestyle for healthier choices in life. Then again, I conceived spontaneously at the age of 39, and it's all because we are all healthy. I am adding my personal money to this initiative. KIIMS Cuddles also talks about infertility issues and removing infertility in men as taboo. They have been pretty successful."

She states, "Obesity is on the rise, substance use is exploited, then there is radiation and all kinds of pollutants, or crops with pesticides, they are all in our bodies causing infertility sometimes. They impact the quality of the sperm. The effort towards parenthood actually starts even before pregnancy. Nearly half of all fertility treatments, especially in-vitro fertilisation, are due to male infertility. Their sperm are susceptible to stress too. Even caffeine-containing soft drinks appear to have negative effects on semen volume, sperm count, and sperm concentration. So, all this is happening in this new world."

However, KIIMS cuddles continue to make parents confident about handling pregnancy, but with joy.

Here is what Shahid Kapoor's signature reveals about him

Done in a matter of seconds, a signature can reveal a lot about your personality. A signature's style and patterns reflect your inner feelings, emotions, and approach to life. For fans of Shahid Kapoor, his signature or autographs can be a peek into his personas off the camera. Read on to know with graphologist Sudhir Kove what Shahid's signature says about him as a person, husband, and thinker.



behind the curtain. The underscore also talks about him doing the things he believes in. His signature has a slant of 45 degrees, which means he has unending dreams and a growth mindset. He expects a lot from himself. He allows himself to flow freely and organically and doesn't believe in over-planning. The spaced-out signature indicates that he enjoys his independence and wants others to enjoy it as well. "Shahid is all for bodily movement. He has strong physical urges, and he likes devoting all of his energy to completing chores

"People with signatures like that of Shahid Kapoor tend to prioritize individual needs over collectivist needs. A proper mummy's boy, Shahid is more fun as a friend than a typical husband or so says his signature. He signs only with his first name, Shahid. It signifies that he is an excellent friend and coworker to hang out with," tells the logo guru. When it comes to marriage, he has his own ways of doing things. Many a time, his partner may have to sacrifice her style but Shahid will not sacrifice or give up his way of doing things. Despite being a lovable husband, he likes to have an upper hand at home. "His signature is the sign of someone being a good administrator and manager. He will also be flamboyant and stylish, which is good for actors. His signature is illegible in nature, which means after the first initial, it is not visi-

ble enough. It makes the person impatient and prone to losing investments. Such a person may try to force his success early, say, taking a project before he is ready. At the same time, the S that he makes shows that he faces challenges from the people he is sympathetic with, like his employees, co-workers, kids or even animals," reveals Sudhir. His signature also means that he's a fast thinker, so he's quick-witted during interviews. The way he signs his D shows he's intelligent and likes to do his research. He has to be convinced before he does anything. So he's truthful and open about his feelings, rather than hiding

and engaging in physical activities that require his body to move such as sports, dancing, and physical intimacy," concluded Sudhir Kove.



'French'nable & chic



Created in Paris and Cultivated in India, *The Pioneer* brings to you the journey behind label Genes Lecoanet Hemant, and Lecoanet Hemant being the only designer to ever exhibit at La Cité de la dentelle et de la mode de Calais

K. RAMYA SREE

Born out of zest for couture, Frenchman Didier Lecoanet and Indo German Hemant Sagar commenced their fashion journey in the late 80s in Paris and established a new language of style with the soul of impeccable Haute Couture perfection. With label Genes Lecoanet Hemant, they have also crafted



their own niche in Ready To Wear over the past 8 spectacular years.

Now, Genes Lecoanet Hemant is working towards achieving complete sustainability in the future and recently introduced Ayurveda in the mix, a concept borrowed from its sister brand Ayurrganic

After 40 years in fashion, the universe of Lecoanet

Hemant remains a progressive and tasteful one.

Not just that, Lecoanet Hemant is the only designer to ever exhibit at La Cité de la dentelle et de la mode de Calais. What makes this the perfect collaboration between your brand and the museum.

"It is a matter of great honour for us that The Calais Museum Of Lace and Fashion presented its first ever retrospective exhibition dedicated

Couture:

Lecoanet Hemant unveils more than forty years of creations blending the art of French couture with the spirit of the East. From the first creations produced by Lecoanet Hemant in its initial incarnation as a Paris-based haute couture house to the shift to ready-to-wear, more than 80 silhouettes underline the savoir faire synonymous with Lecoanet Hemant.

Taking us through their early days, Hemant informs us, "Didier and I met in Paris, as students at the Ecole de la Chambre Syndicale de Couture Parisienne. There was a lot of mutual respect and admiration of our individual journeys, as we studied the art of couture at the epicenter of high fashion. The journey of Lecoanet Hemant began in 1981 with our first store in Rue du Faubourg Saint Honoré. The inaugural collection, in partnership with Cartier Haute Joaillerie, earned us the prestigious membership of Chambre Syndicale de la Couture Parisienne, the governing body of high fashion. The label was an organic reflection of our design philosophy. It was the coming together of our heritage, lived experiences and a common vision for authenticity." He further adds, "The house won the Golden Thimble known as Le de d'or (the Oscar equivalent of Haute

Couture), the Swarovski Creation Prize 2005, and the Designer of the Year Award, Miami 2007. Select creations are now in the permanent collection at London's Victoria and Albert Museum, Deutsches Museum, Berlin, and the Musée des Arts de la Mode, Paris and now find a home at the prestigious La Cité de la dentelle et de la mode de Calais."

As the fashion landscape changed, it marked a new dawn in the brand's trajectory. Lecoanet Hemant moved the business metaphorically, from couture to ready-to-wear, and also physically, from Paris to New Delhi. This saw the conception of Genes and Ayurrganic. Over the years, they have taken inspiration from various cultures and continents. When asked why this has been an important aspect for the brand, he tells us, "Travel has always been instrumental in developing our varied inspirations. The unusual amalgamation of east and west is expressed through modulations of signature drape reminiscent of the sari. It seemed like the obvious step to combine cultures, to forge a vision that thrives on diversity. The theme of nature has also appeared in the very first collections, with pieces made from plant, animal and mineral

based materials: raffia, wood, shells, rice paper to name a few."

According to the designer the fashion landscape in India is very unique, inherently dependent on its strong traditional and cultural roots. He finds it refreshing to see some of those voices find space internationally.

Admired everywhere, the French fashion and the French style is known in the whole world as a classy and elegant style, describing his favourite pieces from their brand, he shares, "The thing with haute couture is that each piece of creation is nurtured and brought to life with love and skill. Every piece is a sacred element that lends voice to the house's vocabulary. One silhouette that embodied our philosophy of gesturing at the brand's eastern roots is the white linen dress from the White Coats collection. It was crucial for us to draw inspiration from culture but never appropriate. Taking cue from a sari, the dress envelops the body in a diagonal spiral flowing into a full skirt that features a mid-thigh slit. What looks simplistic to the viewer is actually an elaborate construction that supports the flowing

skirt and the moulded top into one silhouette. In its essence it is kind of an anti-sari, taking away the volume of the silhouette while maintaining the movement."

Furthermore, telling us more about the Ramie display at this exhibition, he shares, "Our approach to fashion has always had a strong ecological bend. Sustainability is an ever evolving way of being for us. It is about how we look at our methods and transform it for a better tomorrow. This culminated in our effort to promote Ramie, one of the world's oldest textile plants. The exhibition presents a selection of objects created by established Indian designers, made from Ramie- a locally grown, organic, anti-bacterial fibre which is a member of the nettle family and a far more sustainable alternative to other fibres in the market. In collaboration with the government of Meghalaya, the project will also provide a source of income to the many plantation farmers of the region. The unique geographical position of Meghalaya ensures abundant natural water supply through rainfall- ensuring there is no carbon footprint from its agriculture at all."



2 IN 2 FOR MEN IN BLUE

Hooda's maiden century helps India beat Ireland by 4 runs to pocket series 2-0

PTI ■ MALAHIDE

Deepak Hooda hit a master-class maiden century as India survived a mighty scare before defeating Ireland by four runs in a nail-biting high-scoring second T20 International to sweep the two-match series here on Tuesday.

Hooda scored 104 off 57 balls to become only the fourth Indian to hit a T20 International ton, while Sanju Samson contributed 77 off 42 balls to power India to a mammoth 225 for seven after opting to bat.

Ireland took the chase to the last over with skipper Andy Balbirnie (60 off 37), Paul Stirling (40 off 18), Harry Tector (39 off 28) and George Dockrell (34 not out off 16) shining bright but they eventually fell short as rookie India pacer Umransingh defended 17 runs in the final over.

Opting to bat, Hooda showed he belonged to the big stage with his scintillating stroke play, both off the front and backfoot.

While Hooda was elegant and at ease on the frontfoot, he was equally good on the backfoot, dispatching the ball over the midwicket boundary for a few sixes.

Hooda decorated his knock with nine fours and six hits over the fence.

He was ably supported by Sanju Samson, who, opening the batting in place of injured Ruturaj Gaikwad, played second fiddle but grabbed his opportunity with both hands.

Both Hooda and Samson's strokeplay down the ground were a treat for the eyes.

Ireland made a rollicking start to their chase, with Stirling and Balbirnie sharing 72 runs for the opening wicket off just 34 balls. Stirling went hammer and tongs from the world go.

Stirling took Bhuvneshwar Kumar to task, hitting the bowler for a six and three boundaries to pick up 18 runs from the opening over.

Stirling then clobbered skipper Hardik Pandya for a six. The open-



ing duo continued their attacking display to notch up Ireland's 50 for no loss in just four overs.

Leg-spinner Ravi Bishnoi broke the dangerous-looking 72-run opening stand in the sixth over, cleaning up Stirling.

In his next over, Bishnoi had Balbirnie stumped by Ishan Kishan but it turned out to be a massive no ball.

Balbirnie utilised the chance and clobbered all the Indian bowlers to all parts of the ground to keep Ireland at par with the asking rate.

He was particularly severe on young pace sensation Malik, dispatching the pacer's short deliveries over the fence as Ireland brought up their 100 in nine overs for the loss of two wickets.

Balbirnie notched up his sixth T20 International 50 off 34 balls and continued his onslaught for some time before being caught by Bishnoi off Harshal Patel.

But Tector, Dockrell and Mark Adair (23 not out off 12 balls) kept Ireland in the hunt till the last ball from which the hosts needed a six to

win the match and draw the series. Adair, however, could manage just one run as Malik lived up to his captain's call.

Earlier, India did not have the best of starts as they lost Ishan Kishan (3) early. The left-handed opener once again wasted an opportunity, nicking a Mark Adair delivery to Lorcan Tucker behind the stumps in the third over.

Hooda and Samson joined hands and the duo batted effortlessly, albeit handing two difficult chances, to share 176 runs off just 85 balls to lay

the foundation for India's huge total.

It was a one-way traffic after Kishan's dismissal as Hooda and Samson toyed with the Irish bowlers and did not let them settle down.

Except for a difficult chance which Paul Stirling dropped at extra off in the eighth over, Hooda played a perfect knock.

Samson too was handed a life in the ninth over when leg-spinner Gareth Delany dropped a difficult caught-and-bowled chance.

Samson too played some delightful strokes, particularly off the back-

Backed Umransingh for final over because of his pace

PTI ■ MALAHIDE

Express pace was the reason India skipper Hardik Pandya asked Umransingh to bowl the final over of the second T20 International against Ireland here.

Ireland took the chase of 226 to the last over but fell short by four runs as Umransingh defended 17 runs in the last over on Tuesday.

"Not worried to be honest. Wanted to keep pressure out of my equation, wanted to be in the present. I backed Umransingh since he has pace. With his pace, it's difficult for people to hit," Hardik said, explaining the rationale behind giving Umransingh the crucial final over.

Deepak Hooda hit a blistering maiden century as India survived a scare before prevailing over their less fancied opponents in a nail-biting finish.

"I think we've come to play a game of cricket, so Ireland were going to show us what they have. Credit to them, they played amazing shots. At the same point of time, credit to our bowlers to cross the line."

"The crowd was amazing. Their favourites boys were Dinesh and Sanju, great to see them



enjoy them. Good for us to experience cricket in this part of the world too. Grateful to the fans," Hardik said to loud cheers.

Set an imposing target, Ireland showed a lot of heart and nearly pulled off what would have been a memorable victory.

"We are all pretty good, we did a lot of good stuff with the bat. We wanted to express and we did that. Bitterly disappointed, a bitter pill to swallow," Ireland captain Andrew Balbirnie said after the match.

If you don't have any option, then why don't you go there like a warrior: Hooda

PTI ■ MALAHIDE

The big-hitting Deepak Hooda believes himself to be 'a warrior' when faced with the task of tackling the new ball in conditions favourable to bowlers.

Because, according to him, there is no other option but to just face the challenges head on when batting at the top of the order.

Riding his powerful striking abilities, Hooda hogged the limelight with a 57-ball 104 in India's second T20 International against Ireland here on Tuesday.

Batting at number three, Hooda became only the fourth Indian batter to score a century in the shortest format.

"I've never opened in an international game, but being a top-order batsman, you have to cope up to the challenges and you don't have any option."

"And if you don't have any option, then why don't you go there like a warrior. That's how I think, and things turned in my way. I'm happy about that," said Hooda after the match.



With young talents bursting at the seams, the 27-year-old all-rounder admitted that it is not easy to get into, and retain, one's place in the Indian team.

"To be honest, yes it is difficult to find a spot in the Indian team and then staying there. But at the same time when you're playing in India colours, that time you never think about yourself, you think about the

team. That's what I think about on the ground. How can I contribute to the team in that situation. I don't think more than that, try to keep things simple. Yes, it's a matter of pride for me that I'm playing for India, no matter if I'm scoring or not," said Hooda.

Walking in following the dismissal of opener Ishan Kishan in the third over, Hooda smashed nine boundaries and six sixes to score his maiden T20I century.

"To be honest, the Irish team played really well against us and we enjoyed playing against them."

"Between the first and second game, I think there was a difference in the pitch. In the first game, the conditions were overcast and the wicket was very good for batting, as is clear by the way both teams batted. So I felt the wicket was a big factor."

Hooda also revealed that a mindset change recently has helped him perform better.

"Being a cricketer, what

I've learnt lately is that you should not think too far ahead. How many ever series, look at it one game at a time. If my work ethic is good, I'm going to be in a good space of mind and I'm going to score, that's my thinking."

"Try to keep it simple, live in the present, play the situation well, and then automatically the outcome will come. Now or later, it will come," Hooda said.

During the course of the India innings, Hooda was associated in a record-breaking second-wicket partnership of 176 runs with Sanju Samson, who scored a career-best 77 on his return to the team.

It is the highest partnership by an India pair for any wicket in the format, surpassing the previous best of 165 by Rohit Sharma and KL Rahul in 2017 against Sri Lanka in Indore.

"To be honest, I was coming from a good IPL and wanted to follow the same performance. Happy with my intent. I like playing in that manner (aggressive) and these days I am batting up the order so getting some time."

second match to power India to a series-clinching four-run win, galloped 414 places to 104th. Samson was also rewarded for his knock of 77 as he reached the 144th spot in the batting chart.

Ireland's Harry Tector gained a massive 55 places to reach 66th position among batters with scores of 39 and 64 not out in the two-match India-Ireland series.

In the bowlers' list, pacer Harshal Patel moved from 37th to 33rd position while Ireland's Mark Adair climbed to 43rd from 45th.

In Test ranking, Joe Root hung on to his narrow lead as the top-ranked batter but there was some big movement behind him following the completion of England's home series against New Zealand.

New Zealand batting pair of Daryl Mitchell and Tom Blundell have attained career-best positions as has England spinner Jack Leach, after superb performances in the third match of their ICC World Test Championship series in Leeds.

Left-handed batter Kishan slumped to number 7 after scoring 26 and 3 in the two T20s against Ireland but Hooda, who smashed 47 in the first game and a maiden century in the

second match to power India to a series-clinching four-run win, galloped 414 places to 104th. Samson was also rewarded for his knock of 77 as he reached the 144th spot in the batting chart.

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Rohit ruled out of fifth Eng Test, Bumrah to lead India

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Jasprit Bumrah is set to become first fast bowler in 35 years to lead Indian Test team in the rescheduled 'fifth Test' against England as regular captain Rohit Sharma has been ruled out of the game after testing positive for COVID-19 for the second time on Wednesday.

The last pacer-captain that India had was the great Kapil Dev, who was removed from captaincy in 1987. Since then India has never had a speed merchant leading the team in traditional cricket.

"Rohit is out of this Test match, starting July 1, as his RT-PCR test has come positive again. He is still in isolation. Jasprit Bumrah, who is one of the vice-captains in absence of KL Rahul, will lead the team," a senior BCCI official said.

Bumrah will be the 36th cricketer to lead India in the longest-format since the country first played in 1932. The Gujarat pacer, who has 123 wickets in 29 Tests, has grown into world's best fast bowlers.

The Chairman of selectors Chetan Sharma had already said that he is being groomed as



a future leader.

PUJARA/VIHARI TO OPEN

With the experienced Rohit out of the playing eleven, seasoned Cheteshwar Pujara has a good chance of opening the batting with young Shubman Gill. The source said that Mayank

Agarwal has just been brought as "cover" and is not in the scheme of things as far featuring in the playing eleven is concerned. It is understood that the specialist batters in the set-up will be Pujara, Gill, Virat Kohli, Shreyas Iyer, Vihari and Rishabh Pant.

Oz reach 98-3 in reply to Sri Lanka's 212

AP ■ GALLE

Nathan Lyon took his 20th five-wicket haul to bowl Sri Lanka out for 212 before Australia reached 98-3 at stumps Wednesday on the opening day of the first Test.

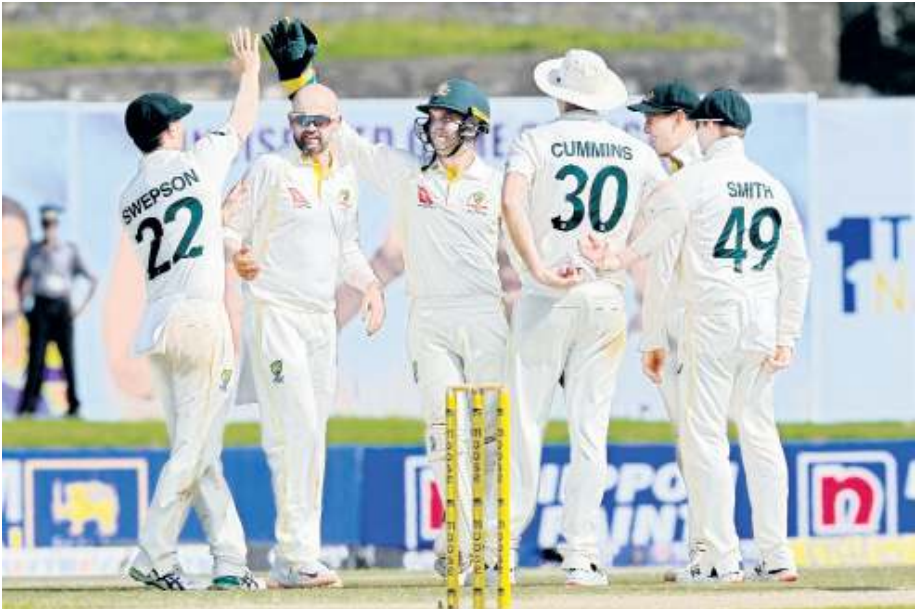
Sri Lankan off spinner Ramesh Mendis dismissed David Warner (25) lbw and had Marnus Labuschagne (13) caught by Asitha Fernando in Australia's innings to finish the day on 2-35.

Steven Smith was run out for 6 after a mix-up with Usman Khawaja, who refused to run after calling Smith for a single.

Khawaja was batting on 47 with Travis Head on 6 at stumps.

Earlier, Lyon returned bowling figures of 5-90 and leg spinner Mitchell Swepson had 3-55 to help Australia bowl Sri Lanka out to a modest score.

Niroshan Dickwella top scored for Sri Lanka with 58, his 21st Test half-century. He added 42 runs for the sixth wicket with Angelo Mathews



(39) after Sri Lanka lost five wickets for 97 runs, and 54 runs for the seventh wicket with Mendis (22).

Lyon trapped Mendis lbw with just two runs added to the teatime score to end his part-

nership with Dickwella. Dickwella edged Lyon to wicketkeeper Alex Carey and had Lasith Embuldeniya (6) as his fifth wicket.

Earlier, he dismissed Dimuth Karunaratne (28) and

Angelo Mathews (39), both caught by David Warner.

Australia's second spinner Mitchell Swepson took two consecutive wickets in the 37th over with identical deliveries.

Babar Azam surpasses Virat as world No.1 T20I batter for longest period

PTI ■ DUBAI

Pakistan captain Babar Azam has surpassed India's Virat Kohli in becoming the world No 1 T20I batter for the longest period of time after he maintained his top spot in the latest ICC T20I batting rankings.

Kohli was the No 1 ranked T20I batter for a total of 1,013 days during his reign last decade, but Babar has now surpassed this number following his long-standing stay at the top.

Among others, Ishan Kishan slipped two places but Deepak Hooda and Sanju Samson made huge gains at the ICC T20I Player Rankings following their sensational innings at the second and final T20I against Ireland.

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second match to power India to a series-clinching four-run win, galloped 414 places to 104th. Samson was also rewarded for his knock of 77 as he reached the 144th spot in the batting chart.

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New Zealand batting pair of Daryl Mitchell and Tom Blundell have attained career-best positions as has England spinner Jack Leach, after superb performances in the third match of their ICC World Test Championship series in Leeds.

Bavuma out of England tour

AP ■ CAPE TOWN

South Africa batsman and Limited-overs captain Temba Bavuma was ruled out of next month's tour to England on Wednesday with a left elbow injury.

Bavuma will miss the three ODIs and three T20 games against England, two T20s against Ireland, and the three-match Test series against England. Bavuma was injured in this month's T20 series in India. He needs eight weeks to recover from the injury, Cricket South Africa said.

Keshav Maharaj will fill in for Bavuma as ODI captain and David Miller will stand in as T20 captain. Dean Elgar is the Proteas' regular Test captain but Bavuma is an important top-order batsman for the Test team.

Fast bowler Kagiso Rabada will be rested for the ODI games but is part of the T20 and Test squads. Young fast bowler Gerald Coetzee received his first call-up and is included in the T20 squad.

Shreyas Talpade, who had already made his name in the Hindi and Marathi film, became an even more popular name in the Tollywood industry after dubbing for *Pushpa: The Rise*. *The Pioneer* connects with the actor for an exclusive interview about his upcoming Bollywood film, and his excitement for dubbing for *Pushpa 2*



Dubbing for *Pushpa 2* will be a bigger challenge: Shreyas Talpade

K. RAMYA SREE

Shreyas Talpade, an actor, director, and producer, known for his work majorly in Hindi and Marathi cinema, is now a popular name even in the Tollywood industry, thanks to his dubbing for Allu Arjun in *Pushpa: The Rise*.

The actor also agrees to the fact that his fandom increased even more after he dubbed the film in Hindi, and he is now gearing up for *Pushpa 2*. Just like any other Allu Arjun fan, even Shreyas is equally excited to experience *Pushpa 2*, given how successful the first edition was.

Shreyas Talpade began his career with *Iqbal* and has since produced blockbusters such as *Om Shanti Om*,

Golmaal Series, *Welcome to Sajjanpur*, *Pushpa*, *The Lion King*, *Kaun Pravin Tambe*, and many others. He is now coming up with a new Bollywood film that he is directing and acting in. While we got in touch with him over the phone, Shreyas informed us, "The film is titled *Sarkar Ki Seva Mein* and it is inspired by true incidents about one taxi driver who wanted to get into government service, but he couldn't initially. We are almost through with the shoot. It will most probably be done by August."

Speaking of what he enjoyed the most about *Pushpa*, he said, "I first loved the whole film. When I first saw the film, I was blown away by the way it was structured, the vengeance, and the way it was presented and treated. Everything about the film was quite amazing to me, and that is what made me say yes to the dub for the film. Moreover, I am a huge admirer of Allu's work. I always enjoyed his work, whether it was *Ala Vaikuntapuram* or

Pushpa. When I started dubbing, I was actually visualising myself on screen. Every actor wants to do a film like this. I don't know when I will get to do a film like this, but until then, I felt I could at least feel myself in that role and dub accordingly. I only visualised myself doing those stunts, romance and everything. The love people showered on me was quite phenomenal."

He further went on to add, "The amount of love I got from kids was most precious. When I saw young people making reels of my dialogues, I felt very happy."

Meanwhile, he informed us that he has no idea about *Pushpa 2*. All that he knows is that the shooting of the film is underway and that he would be more than happy to dub for *Pushpa 2* and that he has a special place for *Pushpa* in his heart. He feels dubbing for *Pushpa 2* would be a bigger challenge if at all that happens, given the bars the film sets amongst the audience.

Shreyas attributes his approach to the films he

makes to his theater background. But what is his favourite genre of film? He answered, "Although I like comedy, I love drama. Drama is where there is emotion, romance, and then there are bonds and relationships. Relationship-based stories are what I enjoy more. In a big way or small, I like to include humour in my films, but the drama genre is my interest."

We also asked him about his views on the talent exchange between South Indian films and Bollywood. He informed us, "There is nothing wrong with talent exchange. I don't understand the negativity around it. Today, there is an audience waiting for true and fresh content. While they worship their heroes, people want fresh content. So now is the time to exchange creativity, talent, and content, and I see nothing wrong with it simply because a few Bollywood films have underperformed while South Indian films have performed well. This is a great opportunity for all of us."



Release of *Yashoda* delayed?

The release of actress Samantha Ruth Prabhu's upcoming movie, Gunasekhar's woman-centric sci-fi thriller *Yashoda*, has most likely been delayed.

Yashoda was slated to premiere on August 12, but the makers are now said to be looking for a new release date. They have, however, not made a formal announcement to this effect, nor an explanation for the postponement.

The upcoming drama *Yashoda* is a survival thriller

about an imprisoned woman, played by Ruth Prabhu. It was originally shot in Telugu but is now scheduled to be released in Tamil, Malayalam, Kannada, and Hindi after being dubbed.

In addition to Ruth Prabhu, other notable actors in the movie include Varalaxmi Sarathkumar, Rao Ramesh, Unni Mukundan, Murali Sharma, Sampath Raj, Shatru, Madhurima, Divya Sripada, Priyanka Sharma, and Kalpika Ganesh.

Singer couple denies rumours of separation

For the past few days, Telugu media has been buzzing with rumours that Tollywood singing duo Vedala Hemachandra and Sravana Bhargavi are about to call it quits on their nine-year marriage. Now that the couple has dismissed the rumours, they have come up with quirky posts on their socials.

Hemachandra, a renowned playback singer and dubbing artist, has finally spoken out about reports that he and his wife Sravana Bhargavi, a well-known singer and TV anchor, are divorcing.

Hemachandra posted a humorous message on his Instagram account to deny all the rumours. "Unnecessary, irrelevant, stupid information spreads much faster than my independent songs," Hemachandra's topsy-turvy Instagram post reads.

Hemachandra's wife, a singer too, Sravana Bhargavi, took to her Instagram to



covey, "In the past few days, My Youtube views have gone up, My Instagram followers have increased, I'm getting more work than I usually do, I'm earning more than I usually do. Good call. Right or wrong, Media is a blessing Random Thought."

Vidyasagar, the husband of well-known south actress Meena, passed away at a private hospital in the city on Tuesday night. He was 48. Sources close to the actress said that Vidyasagar was

The health condition of Vidyasagar, who was hospitalised for the treatment of his lung problem, worsened on Tuesday night and he passed away around 7 p.m. Meena, who has worked extensively in Tamil, Telugu,

Actress Meena's husband passes away

diagnosed with a lung ailment in March this year and had to be treated for it. Prior to that, he was down with COVID-19, but had managed to recover from it.

Kannada, and Malayalam cinema for over three decades has been a part of several critically acclaimed superhits including *Drishyam* and more.



Mahesh Babu, Namrata meet Bill Gates



Superstar Mahesh Babu has met Microsoft founder Bill Gates in the United States. Gates, Babu, and his wife Namrata Shirodkar posed for a picture together. Babu is now on vacation in the United States. His wife and kids have been showing off pictures from their trip over the last few days. His recent pictures from the vacation, have been trending on social media platforms for a while now.

On the work front, Babu just scored a super hit with the movie *Sarkaru Vaari Paata*, and will next be directed by Ala Vaikunthapuramu Loo fame Trivikram Srinivas. He also has a movie with SS Rajamouli.



Vikram to premiere on Disney+ Hotstar from July 8

punch word has become the chant of his hard-core fans.

Kamal Haasan's rejuvenated looks and herculean charisma, Fahadh Faasil's sparkling performance, Vijay Sethupathi's terrorizing antagonist act, and Suriya's overpowering cameo together left the fans in ultimate enthrallment.

Besides, Filmmaker Lokesh Kanagaraj's proficiency in building LCU (Lokesh Cinematic Universe), by bringing in a few characters from *Kaithi* and extending them for the future instalments excited fans to the core. The emblazoning visuals of Girish Gangadharan

and the spellbinding musical score by Anirudh Ravichander turned out to be the ultimate icing on the cake.

Vikram will be available on Disney+ Hotstar in Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam and Hindi from July 8, 2022, onwards.

Kriti Sanon, Prabhas to share sizzling chemistry in *Adipurush*

The Indian cinema is all set to see a plethora of big-budget films releasing next year showcasing some really exciting new pairings as well, case in point, is the Prabhas and Kriti Sanon starrer and Om Raut directorial, *Adipurush*.

While we hoped that extremely power-packed performers like

Kriti and Prabhas sharing the screen together would definitely be a treat for all fans and also romance lovers, a source close to the film has confirmed the same.

A source close to the film who has seen some bits and pieces of it, shares, "Last week, the entire cast and film team had gotten together at director Om Raut's house to celebrate what

they have achieved till now and to see how the film is shaping up. They also watched some of Kriti and Prabhas' scenes, which have turned out very well. The chemistry between them has translated beautifully, they just make for a fabulous pair on screen."

Adipurush is all set to hit the big screens on January 12, 2023.

